

## 23ba Omemee, Ont. – A Brief Railway History

Omemee first came to be served by a railway in late 1857, when the construction of the **Port Hope, Lindsay & Beaverton Railway** (as of 1869 the **Midland Railway of Canada**), worked its way north from Bethany along what is now Ski Hill Road, or Kawartha Road 38. It crossed King Street West, and then curved west along Deane Street North over to what is now Sibley Road/Avenue North, on its way to Lindsay.

The location of the first Omemee station is not known, but was likely in the vicinity of where the line crossed King Street West, possibly alongside Deane Street.

The first station was replaced by a new one in 1875, described in a contemporary account to be "east of the track, and not more than 20 rods north of King Street". (A rod is an old Imperial measurement of length. There are four rods to a chain, which is 66 ft. So the second station was to be not more than 110 yards north of King Street.)

The Port Hope, Lindsay & Beaverton Railway had also built a branch from Millbrook to Peterborough in 1858. At that time there was no direct railway connection between Peterborough and Lindsay, travellers having to go via Millbrook Jct. For a more direct route between Peterborough, Lindsay and Toronto, construction of the "Missing Link" from Peterborough to meet "the Old Road" (the original direct line of the Port Hope, Lindsay & Beaverton Railway between Millbrook and Omemee) at Sibley Ave north of King Street, was begun in 1882.

This junction (which came to be known as "Omemee West") was effected in 1883 just east of Sibley Ave., and the 1875 station was then abandoned. The first train passed over the new line on November 23, 1883. A new two-storey station and freight house were constructed in 1888 between the diverging tracks east of Sibley Ave. Traces of this junction are still visible today.

(Note: The other hindrance to a direct route between Peterborough and Toronto [then via Lorneville] was eliminated by a connection between Manilla Jct. [just north of the hamlet of Cresswell] on the original Whitby, Port Perry & Lindsay Railway, and Wick [Blackwater] Jct. on the former Toronto & Nipissing Railway. This was completed a year or so previously, and was opened for traffic in early 1883.)

The Midland Railway was formally leased to the **Grand Trunk Railway of Canada** (GTR) as of January 1, 1884, and was amalgamated into the GTR in 1893. The GTR was in turn amalgamated into the new **Canadian National Railways** (CNR) in 1923.

About 1909 the Village started to pressure the GTR to provide a more convenient stop, with the result that a platform (and later a waiting room), was established at Sturgeon Road, north of King Street. It is not clear when the station building now in the grounds of Lady Eaton Elementary School was erected, but it was likely sometime between 1915 and 1927. When "the Old Road" between Millbrook and Omemee was abandoned, the agent at the Junction, Mr. William Dickson, was appointed to the smaller station at Sturgeon Road. The former Omemee Junction station, also the home of the Dickson family, was destroyed by fire in February 1927.

The last passenger train passed through Omemee on January 31, 1962, and the Lindsay – Peterborough line was abandoned in 1989.

This summary would not be complete without reference to the fact that the **Canadian Pacific Railway** also touched the railway history of Omemee, although much more modestly. When the CPR-sponsored **Georgian Bay & Seaboard Railway** was built from Port McNicholl through to Montreal in 1912, Omemee effectively gained a flagstop (Rea Station) between Franklin and Hillhead stations on the Bethany Junction - Lindsay Junction section of the line (removed in 1987). The shelter was no more than a converted old boxcar that sat on the east side of the track in Concession 10, Lot 5 of Ops Twp., south of Crosswind Road.

For more information, please see leaflets "23ad Victoria County – A Capsule Railway History" and "23a Midland Railway of Canada".