

Fort Erie Railroad Museum

Ridgeway Station

c. 1900

An Architectural Gem

“Stylistically, [the Ridgeway Station] is a late representation of the Picturesque Style (irregularity, intricacy, and variety) that originated in England. It incorporates a number of stylistic influences. The brackets, tower, and tripartite windows are Italianate. The eyebrow windows are reminiscent of thatched roofs but the steep hipped roof itself is Chateau style. The board and batten siding is usually associated with... Gothic Revival.”

-Denis Heroux, Architectural Conservancy of Ontario

Strictly speaking, Picturesque is a philosophy. Those who created it in the late 18 C., and brought it to North America in the 19 C. were seeking to bring “nature” back to landscaping (but also influenced architecture). It was through the use of irregularity, intricacy and variety that this philosophy was presented. The Ridgeway Station illustrates one way this aesthetic point of view has been expressed.

The development of a town

“Ridgeway was the municipal seat of government for Bertie Township, a postal village and a station stop on the Grand Trunk Railway. It was never incorporated as a village or town but it developed as a classic diversified country village...”

In 1864 the Grand Trunk Railway was completed and Ridgeway had a station* on that line. The intersection of the railroad and Ridge Road formed the nucleus of the village and businesses developed along Ridge Road between the station and Dominion Road. The majority of Ridgeway’s businesses remain in this three-block area today...

[The main business district] comprised a diverse array of service and retail establishments and was supported mainly by people in the Ridgeway/ Crystal Beach/ Stevensville area. This diversity has helped to sustain the village through the years, and Ridgeway continues to have a thriving downtown core.”

* this original station (Bertie) was replaced around the turn of the century by the present station (Ridgeway).

Fast Facts

c. 1900 - Station built by Grand Trunk Railway to service the community of Ridgeway. Originally sited on Ridge Rd, between Hibbard St. and Disher St.

1975 - Moved to current location at the Fort Erie Railroad Museum.

\$4,500 - Estimated cost of moving station.

For more information, refer to Many Voices: A Collective History of Greater Fort Erie, published by the Fort Erie Museum Board, 1996. The above quotes are from this source.

Q: How do you move a building?

A: Carefully!

Buildings have been moved in North America since late 18th C. At that time, building materials were very costly and acquiring them labour intensive. Therefore, moving whole structures was an economical decision.

A historic building should only be moved as a last resort. Moving a structure unavoidably destroys some historic fabric, no matter how carefully the work proceeds. It also reduces the historic integrity of a building (often the relationship of the building to the original site is a large factor in its historic significance. Once lost, that relationship, or context, is impossible to recreate in another location). If no alternatives exist to preserve a structure in situ, then moving is certainly preferred over demolition!

Essentially the process of moving a structure is simple. It is first stabilized, then freed from any existing foundation. Cribbing and jacks are used to slowly raise the structure, to get it onto a vehicle for transport. Truck beds, railroad flat cars and river barges have all been used for transport, depending on convenience. A reversal of the cribbing and jacking process gets the structure onto a new foundation, where it is fastened into place.

The most important work is done before any work crews arrive. The structure should be thoroughly documented, with photographs, video tape and measured drawings.

It's better to be safe, than sorry!

For more information, refer to [Moving Historic Buildings](#), by John Obed Curtis, published by AASLH Press.

Vital Stations

The Ridgeway area had two railway stations and they each played a vital role in the community's survival.

The first station, built in the mid 1800's on the Buffalo and Lake Huron Railway line, was located on the west side of Ridge Road, and named in honour of the township. That Bertie Station played a role in the Fenian Raids of 1866, when the Queen's Own Rifles arrived by train from Port Colborne to take part in the battle. The soldiers disembarked at Bertie Station, and marched up Ridge Rd. to join the action.

The second station, the Ridgeway Station, was integral to saving the town from burning to the ground in 1913. When station agent Albert Yaeck determined that the local fire brigade couldn't handle a fire blazing through downtown, he telegraphed Port Colborne and Fort Erie for assistance. Tenders quickly arrived by rail, providing over 10,000 gallons of water to use on the fire. The fire was contained, and many businesses were saved.

All in a day's work for a small town station.

