South Crosby Railway Stations

By Neil A. Patterson

Elgin's first railway station was not in South Crosby, but Bastard Township. When the Brockville, Westport and Sault Ste. Marie Railway was completed in 1888, the Elgin Station was on County Road 8 between Elgin and Philipsville. The station was a long low one-story facility with a large freight section. The attached photo shows the one-story station with only the Elgin name on it.

The reason it only had the Elgin name was the action of the South Crosby Municipal Council. When the original backers and fund raisers for the B & W could not raise the funds to build the railroad and they turned their charter over to Robert G. Hervey of the Kickerbocker Trust of New York City. He went up and down the proposed line making deals for funding from towns and municipalities that would benefit from the rail line. On September 12, 1883, the South Crosby Council passed a motion approving a $5000.00 grant to the line which also included the agreement that the station would be named the Elgin Station only. The station was busy enough to need a siding as Philip Halladay received most of his Farm Implements for his Elgin Agricultural Supply Business there. The station also had cattle pens and loading ramps for Drovers such as Frederick Atcheson whose farm was next to the station and helped him pasture the animals until Saturday, which was their shipping day.

Two derailments happened at this station, on November 19, 1888, a cattle car jumped the track just passed the siding killing 3 cows and another 4 had to be put out of their misery. On April 13, 1922, the second accident just west of the station was more serious. Almost the entire train left the tracks with some cars landing on their sides, but there were no injuries.

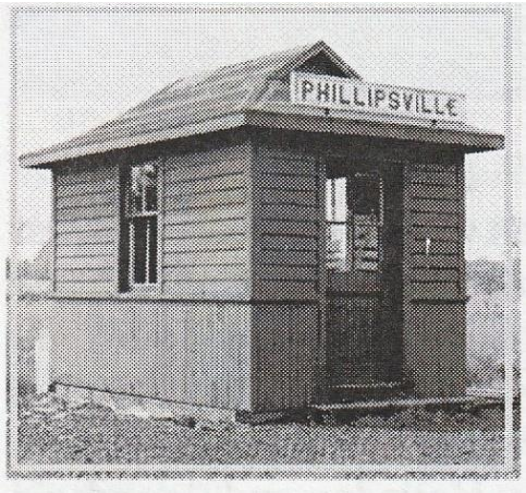
When the Elgin Canadian Northern station was built 1913 the previous Elgin B & W station had to change name. The siding, at the renamed Philipsville Station, proved very helpful for the Cooper Brick Yard just down the road. In June of 1916, station agent Warner Phelps arranged for 100,000 bricks to be shipped to Westport for the construction of the Presbyterian Church.

The Brockville, Westport and Sault Ste. Marie Line had one South Crosby Township station and that was at Crosby. The building was one story with a ticket office, waiting room and a large freight storage section. The first Station

Agent was Merrick Rockwood and he boarded at John Knowlton's during the late 19th Century. Crosby was near many Cheese Factories and on Fridays the freight train that was equipped with cars holding blocks of ice were loaded with cheese destined to the Brockville Cheese Exchange. In the last decade of the 19th Century and the first decade of the 20th Century, as many as 5000 rounds of cheese were shipped from the B & W stations in the Friday ice cooled box cars. Round was the name used for an approximately 40 pound round block of cheddar cheese that was shipped in a round box, many of which were made in the Haskins Cheese Box Factory in Phillipsville. Newboro Station was located in what had been the North Crosby section of that Village.

Seven stations, including Crosby and Elgin, constructed in 1889, were designed and built by John Warwick. Italian workmen were brought in for the construction and the painting was done by Frank Reynolds of Westport. The stations were painted a deep dark red with green trim.

The Phillipsville Station was an exception, as it was just a very small waiting room building located where the tracks cross Hartsgravel Road. This was within walking distance from the village and was visible from the Catholic Church. This small waiting room was known on the line as a flag station. Passenger trains had to be flagged down to have the train stop for passengers. The Phillipsville freight was unloaded at the Elgin named station. The largest shipper from Phillipsville was the Haskins Cheese Box Manufacturer which shipped to all the cheese factories along the line and used the then Elgin Station.



In the summer of 1889, 100 cars loaded with Stone were shipped from Crosby for construction in downtown Montreal. The stone was quarried on the Knowlton Farm just west of Crosby.

The B and W carried the mail out of Brockville to all the villages along the line and it arrived at Crosby Station in the late afternoon. The outbound mail left on the early morning train and a certain late sleeping Crosby Postmaster was seen many mornings running for a moving train. On June 13, 1906, the worst storm in many years, tore out the tracks at Crosby and flooded the station. It took 5 days to repair the track and most of the summer to clean and fix the damage at

the station. The train station was located on the east side of Highway 15 near the Church and Cemetery. In 1952, the railway ceased operation and the station was torn down.

On December 30th, 1913, the first train arrived at the Canadian Northern Station at Elgin. The new station for the Canadian Northern, which ran between Smith Falls and Nappanee, was located west of the village where the Cataraqui Trail crosses Highway 15. The station was designed by Ralph Benjamin Pratt and had a second story living area built for the station agent and family. The Canadian Northern stations were painted dark red with black trim. The first station agent was George Harrington and at 20 years of age he brought his new bride to their first home at the station. The passenger trains ran in the daytime, the westbound at 2:34 pm. and the eastbound at 4:33 pm. The freight trains ran during the night and with a large siding at Elgin, the loading and shunting were all done in darkness. The station received large quantities of farm equipment for Philip Halladay, furniture for Campbell's Furniture Store and merchandise for retailers. In the summer, large crates of sheet mica were shipped from the Laishley Cobbing Facility in Elgin to General Electric. Elgin was the supply base for a large agricultural population which also used the railway to ship livestock, cheese, and other farm produce.

In 1921, there were 9 people listed in the Census as section workers for the railway. The foreman was George Gifford and they were upgrading the line for its proposed sale to Canadian National. After 1923, both the B & W and the Canadian Northern were part of the Canadian National Railway system. Forfar was the switching station where the two lines crossed and the Station agent at that location had railway workers as the tracks had to be manually switched 24 hours per day and 7 days a week.

During the Second World War, the Elgin Station Agent was Mr. Watts and his daughter, Hilda and her 2 brothers can be seen in the included photo playing on the station platform. During the 1940's they went to the Red Brick School in Elgin and walked the 2 miles each way everyday winter and summer.

Elgin Station closed in 1966 and was later removed, the last train past the station was in 1977 and the tracks were removed in 1979.

The Chaffeys Lock Railway Station was constructed by a Canadian Northern crew as well as all the lines area stations.

Work began on May 17, 1913, and was completed on the 3rd of September that year. The first station agent arrived in early December and the station opened on December 30th, 1913. The first freight train to stop at the station was on January 7, 1914, and the first passenger train to stop was 13 days later. The first station agent was George Gifford who later took over the section crew and Mr. Knox replaced him.

In the summer of 1914, Canadian Northern decided to run a 5:00 o'clock train out of Ottawa arriving at the Chaffeys Station at

about 6:30 and the return train out of Chaffeys at 7:00 am. This was a Monday to Friday service with 75 passengers transported using a gasoline electric generator powered train. This train needed to overnight at Elgin as there was no siding at Chaffeys and the freight train had to get through. The idea was to provide a means for Ottawa workers to commute to their summer cottages on the Big Rideau, Upper Rideau, Newboro and Indian Lake. There is one name that appears in the ticket sales book many times. This person was Francis Pedley, an Ottawa Lawyer, who owned Terrymore Island and cottage on Indian Lake.

Agnes Richardson converted their family summer home on an Island in Indian Lake to a Hospital for shell shock victims of the First World War. The Chaffeys Railway Station was their connection to the Hospital and medical services in Kingston. Dr. Farrer, the Nurses and up to 60 patients used the station constantly between 1916 and 1918.

At 5:05 am. in the morning of September 7th, 1926, the station agent and his family were awakened to the entire station shaking. The north bound passenger train was derailed next to the station and hundreds of sleeping passengers were thrown from their seats and beds. The train ripped the platform off the front of the station, however, the derailed cars remained upright, and the only serious injury was to the engineer.

The Opinicon, Simmons Resorts, the tent camp and cottages used the rail line for supplies and many of their guests. There was an agent at the station during the 1950's and after he left recipients of freight had to arrange their own pickup or shipments. The station was torn down in 1966 and freight trains passing in the night never stopped.

The only part of Chaffeys Station left was a small shed used by the maintenance crew to house their gasoline powered section car. The maintenance workers used the section car to travel from Forfar to Sydenham to inspect the tracks and make necessary repairs. The small shed remained after the train stopped in 1977 and the tracks removed in 1979. It is the only reminder that a very active railway station once stood on the site south of the village on Opinicon Road.