

Chaffey's Lock Heritage Walking Trail

1. Site of Chaffey's Train Station:

The Cataraqui Trail was originally part of the Canadian Northern Railway (later the Canadian National Railway) that operated from 1914 until 1979. The nearby iron bridge was a railway trestle spanning the canal. For several decades there was a busy train station in Chaffey's Lock.

The Railway Line: In 1911 the Canadian Northern Railway began building this section of the railway between Smiths Falls and Sydenham. The complex construction involved spanning gorges with cribbing and fill, dynamiting rock outcroppings and constructing the trestle. A 1912 blasting accident west of Chaffey's Lock killed eight workers. Trains began operating along the line in 1914 and it became a busy passenger and freight conduit. In 1923 the Canadian National Railway acquired the track. Although traffic diminished over the years, it remained an active railway until 1979. After the tracks were removed, the rail bed became part of the Cataraqui Trail.

The Station House: Completed in 1913, the Chaffey's Lock station house, designed by Ralph Pratt, was painted dark red with black trim. For many years the station agent and his family lived in quarters behind the ticket counter and on the upper floor. Local resorts, cottagers and permanent residents used the daily passenger and freight trains. Dairy products and fish were shipped out and supplies came in. The station was torn down around 1960, after passenger trains stopped using the line, The remaining shed was used by maintenance crews to house their gasoline powered hand-car.

2. Fernbrae:

Fernbrae was built in 1897 to house the mill operator. It replaced an earlier home in a different location. Later it was expanded, and photos from the 1930s show the house with a central chimney and two open porches. For years it functioned as a boarding house, operated by Jenny Laishley. In 1977 the Opinicon purchased the house to use as lodging for guests. Sold separately from the Opinicon in 2015, it is now a private residence.

3. Bywash and Bridges:

What is now the bywash (or waste weir) was once the outlet for rapids which were 304 meters (333 yards) in length and dropped about 4 meters (13 feet). For boats to travel between Indian and Opinicon Lakes a lock was required to circumvent the rapids. Now water flow through the bywash is controlled by stop-logs south of the bridge over the bywash. The mill used this water flow to operate. Although the original Chaffey's Mills had a bridge over the rapids it was too low to allow vessels to pass beneath it and Col. By had it removed. During the first years of the mill's operation no bridge existed over the lock and bywash. Local farmers ferried their grain across to the mill. A foot bridge was available by the 1880s. A wooden swing bridge built over the lock was replaced by a steel swing bridge in 1949. That bridge was replaced in 2015 by the present steel swing bridge of similar design.

4. **Chaffey's Mill:**

In 1872 John Chaffey opened a grist mill on the Opinicon Lake side of the bywash. He was a nephew of Samuel Chaffey who built the original mills in the area, which were demolished when the canal was built. The Dargavel family took over the mill and William Kerruish worked as the miller until 1922, when it ceased operation. Subsequently, the building served as a summer residence for the Phelps family. In 2016, the main floor of the mill became The Mill Art Gallery and welcomes visitors in the summer months.

5. **Chaffey's Lock:**

The original plan for the Chaffey's lock station called for two locks and two dams. That plan was altered, resulting in the construction of a single lock and a waste weir. Originally Lock 37 of 49 locks, the lock station, including the canal, lock and bywash, was built from 1828 to 1831 at a cost of just over £4000. The contractor, John Haggart, a Scotsman, employed between 70 and 100 men, who with their wives and children lived in shanties along the canal. Trees in the lock area were cut and cleared on both sides of the canal. The complete Chaffey milling complex had to be dismantled and the old river bed widened. The sandstone blocks for the lock were quarried just east of Elgin and hauled to the site on wooden sleds called stone boats.

6. **Storage Shed and Ice House site:**

Ice was cut from the lake in winter for use throughout the summer. Ice houses were normally insulated with sawdust and featured only one small window in order to limit outside air, thereby preserving the ice. Eventually that building was torn down and only stables for animals remained. Located across the road from the Museum, the building is now used by Parks Canada for storage.

7. **The Opinicon Resort:**

In the late 19th century Lockmaster William Henry Fleming bought property from the Crown, which included a house possibly built for a tenant miller. Shortly thereafter, William Laishley purchased the house and planning a resort, added a wing. He called his establishment the Idylwild. In 1902 it boasted accommodation for 40 guests with a large dining room and cool verandahs. In 1904 Laishley sold it to a group from Youngstown, Ohio who renamed it the Opinicon Club. The hotel operated as a private club until 1921, when it was taken over by William Phillips, a Pennsylvanian. Its location on fish-rich Opinicon Lake – created when the Rideau Canal was constructed – made the home a draw for fishing enthusiasts and tourists. It remained with his descendants until 2015, when it was purchased by Fiona McKean, who has carefully restored and updated the site.

8. **Marion Dunn Heritage Trail:**

The trail follows the route of the original road built to bring stones to the lock from the Halladay Quarry at Elgin. The path goes from the old canalmen's house at the entrance to the Opinicon to the Chaffey Grave Yard. The route passes among many old locust,

black cherry, butternut and maple trees that have grown since Col. By had the land cleared, done in an attempt to prevent malaria which was then thought to have been caused by bad air. The remains of one of Samuel Chaffey's buildings, the lime kiln and blacksmith shop are located on this trail. Marion Dunn, a granddaughter of an original settler provided the Chaffey's Lock & Area Heritage Society with funds to create and maintain the trail.

9. Cemetery and Memory Wall:

The first interment in the Chaffey Cemetery was that of Joseph Poole, father of Mary Ann Chaffey. Mary Ann's first husband Samuel Chaffey is also buried here. He died of malaria in 1827 and was buried here as was Mary Ann who died in 1888. In August, 1828, malaria affected the construction workers at Chaffey's and 11 labourers were quickly buried in the Chaffey Cemetery. About 80 people lie under the unmarked stones, including local families and canal labourers – many far from their homes in Ireland and England - who died over the four year construction period. A few burials occurred during the 20th Century, including the two Simmons Brothers. Both are descendants of James Simmons who was killed in a rock cut blast while building the canal. The Memory Wall, built of lock stones, contain plaques that provide a social history of Chaffey's in later years. Commemorated are year-round and summer residents.

10. The Community Hall:

The Chaffey's Lock Community Hall was built by the Chaffey's Lock Women's Institute, which succeeded in its goal of opening the Hall in time for the 100th anniversary of the Rideau Canal in 1932. Its construction was funded by activities such as bake sales, dances, and raffles, with materials and labour donated by the community. The Institute added the kitchen in 1978. In 2013 the Hall was closed for repairs. Due to extensive fundraising, a Trillium Grant and collaboration between the Township of Rideau Lakes and the Chaffey's Lock Hall Board, the Hall reopened a few months later, featuring a number of improvements. Today the Hall is operated by the Chaffey's Lock and Area Heritage Society and is available for concerts, community gatherings, and private events.

11. Celtic Cross:

In memory and recognition of the canal workers the Celtic Cross is a wonderful representation of faith. The Celtic Cross first emerged in Ireland in the early Middle Ages. Subject to many different interpretations, the Celtic Cross is said to be an expression of knowledge, strength and compassion.

12. Simmons Fishing Lodge:

The first owner of the property, Thomas Simmons, was descended from James Simmons, a Royal Sapper and Miner involved in the construction of the Rideau Canal. In 1886 a young American tourist knocked on the Simmons' door asking for room and board. He had heard of the area's wonderful fishing and became the first tourist at Chaffey's Lock. The Simmons family have continued the tradition of hospitality ever

since, offering guided fishing trips and by adding a dining room and small cottages. The original lodge burned down in 1996 and was replaced by the building seen today.

13. Dorothy's Lodge:

Started by Dorothy Alford around 1950, Dorothy's was originally a guest house featuring fishing and tourist accommodation next door to Simmons' Lodge. There was a restaurant on its premises until it was purchased by a family who renovated the lodge and offered it to groups gathering for family activities or conferences. There is a main lodge overlooking the canal along with several cottages nearby.

14. Trestle Bridge:

The trestle bridge across the entrance to Indian Lake was built in 1912 as part of a section of the Canadian Northern Railway line running from Smiths Falls to Sydenham. A feat of engineering at the time, the trestle was set in place using a bridge crane, while local residents watched from Simmons' lawn.

15. Lockmaster's House Museum:

Built in 1844 as a defensible lockmaster's house to defend the canal against American-based raiders, the Lockmaster's house was originally a one story sandstone structure. It had a tin roof, two stone porches and gun slits to provide defense in case of an attack. The house was occupied continuously from 1844 to 1967, by only 5 lockmasters. In 1894, it was renovated and a clapboard second story and a kitchen addition were added. When William Henry Fleming was lockmaster the house had the only phone in Chaffey's and also housed the local Post Office. Last occupied in 1967, the house was renovated to become a museum as a 150th anniversary project in 1982. The museum is operated by the Chaffey's Lock and Area Heritage Society.