



P.O. Box 462, Stouffville, Ontario L4A 7Z7

York-Durham Heritage Railway -- Our History & Future

The York-Durham Heritage Railway is **volunteer-run** short-line railway that makes regular Sunday tourist trips between Uxbridge and Stouffville. In Uxbridge, we depart from the Uxbridge Railway Station, which is the beautifully restored Grand Trunk Railroad “Witches Hat”-style station built in 1904. In Stouffville, we depart from the Stouffville GO Train Station on Main Street at noon on Sundays.

In 1986, the original founders conceived the idea of operating a tourist train on the unused railway tracks that ran between Uxbridge and Stouffville. Their goal was to educate the public about our nation’s train heritage by offering them the original experience of a real train trip while riding along the beautiful Oak Ridges Moraine and enjoying its scenery.

By 1990, the York-Durham Heritage Railway Association had been incorporated as a not-for-profit organization. In October of 1992, the YDHRA acquired their first two pieces of rolling stock, a Montreal-built passenger coach, and an old CPR caboose.

The rail line that the YDHR runs on has a special place in the Ontario history books. The train originally came through Uxbridge as part of the Toronto and Nipissing Railway, a project of William Gooderham of the Gooderham and Worts Distillery in Toronto and received its official charter March 4th, 1868. At the time, the majority of the lumber and cordwood used in Toronto was brought down the Trent River, through Trenton from the Haliburton Highlands. Cordwood was the main source of heat in Toronto at the time, and the wood from the Haliburton Highlands was very expensive. Gooderham hoped to bring wood into Toronto in a more economical fashion so that he could profit by selling his cordwood and lumber at a lower price. At the same time, he brought grain on the T&N to Toronto for his distillery.

Originally meant to run from Toronto all the way up to North Bay on Lake Nipissing, the T&N only reached the village of Coboconk. What distinguished the T&N from other railways built in Ontario during this period, was the T&N was built as a narrow-gauge railway with rails set at 3’6”, instead of the standard-gauge where rails are set at 4’8½”. The narrow-gauge chosen by the T&R was more economical to construct than the standard-gauge.

In order to have the T&N stop in their town, municipalities had to monetarily sponsor the T&N. This was how the T&N financed each new leg of the railway. Uxbridge was chosen to be the location of the T&N’s maintenance shops. These shops generated income for local merchants due to the added population of skilled workers in the Town. The decision to locate the shops in Uxbridge was largely due to the fact that Uxbridge’s Town Council voted to give the T&N \$2,000 more than any other town had given.

The T&N opened for public service July 1, 1871. In April 1881, the Midland Railway bought the T&N, and the shops were closed and moved to other locations. The gauge of the railway was also changed to the standard 4’ 8 ½” to permit interchange of freight cars with other railways. By late 1884, the Midland Group’s lines had been purchased by the Grand Trunk Railway. In 1920, the GTR became part of the CNR. Trains stopped running on the tracks from Uxbridge to Stouffville by the early 1990s. The tracks were left in out-of-service status, for possible future use by GO Transit.

Summary of Our Equipment

We have three heritage locomotives:

- RS-3 #1310 (Built by the Montreal Locomotive Works, November 1951)
- RS-3 #22 (Built by the Montreal Locomotive Works, April 1955)
- RS-11 #3612 (Built by the American Locomotive Co., September 1956)

We have eight heritage passenger coaches with three Budd coaches currently in service today:

- Coach #4960 (Built by Pullman, May 1919): This car was originally built as a Colonist Sleeper Car, but was later converted for commuter service.
- Coach #3233 and Coach #3209 (Former CN coaches built in the 1950s).
- Boise Budd Coaches 101 & 106 built in 1955 (rebuilt in 1982 and updated in 2008)
- Boise Budd Coach 102 built in 1955 (rebuilt in 1982 and updated in 2008)
- Boise Budd Coach 104 built in 1955 currently being restored by the YDHR by all our volunteers with the plans to have this coach into service by our 2014 Santa Train Rides
- Boise Budd Coach 103 built in 1955 is still in need of restoration
- The Budd cars began their lives as Rail Diesel Cars (RDC's), one of the most marketable and well-designed passenger railway vehicles. They were manufactured by the Budd Co. of Philadelphia for the Boston & Maine (B&M) Railroad in 1955. B&M was taken over by Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority in 1975 and then sent them to Morrison-Knudson in Boise, Idaho to be rebuilt & modernized for commuter service, hence the name Boise Budd. They were then sold to The Vermont Agency of Transportation in 2003 and were purchased by Guelph Junction Express in 2008 who updated three of them and sold all five to the YDHR in 2012.

We have two other cars in regular service today:

- Baggage Car #9636 (Built by National Steel Car in Hamilton, Ontario, May 1957 for the CNR): Here you will find a snack counter/souvenir stand, and washrooms.
- Caboose #434908 (Built for CNR in 1953)

We also have other examples of railway cars and maintenance-of-way equipment which are not used as part of our on-rail passenger train, but are in our yard for visitors to view.

The Future of the YDHR

The YDHR is moving forward! We have a variety of new ideas on the table for more exciting programming that will both entertain and educate the public. Keeping with the educational thread, we are also implementing a fundraising program in order to restore more heritage pieces, and to maintain our current equipment, so that visitors have even more opportunity to view our historical railroad equipment. We are also continuing to improve our museum. We plan to implement educational programs, based on the Ontario Curriculum that we could offer to schools, giving school children the opportunity to see their history lessons brought to life by riding the train!

We also run charter trips for families, organizations and tour operators. Our trains have often been used for movie productions, parties and wedding photograph backdrops.

