

Heritage Port Stanley
Thursday, Sept. 25, 2025 7:00
PTR Bridge Station in L&PS passenger car

Attendance 30 (26 members and 4 guests)

Chair David Russell opened the meeting at 7:00 and welcomed everyone.

Nora Sanders shared the land acknowledgement

1. **Adoption of the Minutes of June 26 meeting:** Moved by Richard Haddow and seconded by Laurie Nagge that the minutes be approved as circulated and the motion carried.

2. **Treasurer's report:** Anne Kent presented the treasurer's report:

Current balance in the general account is \$2502.35 with two GICs of \$8000 and \$3000 noting that the website development and domain cost \$1788.46 and that we received a Central Elgin grant for \$480 for editing our interview videos.

Moved by Anne Kent, seconded by Bronwyn Fitz-James that the report be adopted as presented. The motion carried.

3. **Executive Update:** David noted the web site was up but still had errors to be corrected and thanked those that had offered suggestions for corrections. Nora shared the news about the grant and that it is for editing the videos to get them on the website.
4. **Report on Oral Histories:** Dave explained that they has talked the summer off and interviewed Carmen Speers last Saturday. If you know others who should be interviewed please email them with suggestions to (dave3000@bell.net or norahome@rogers.com)
5. **Walking Tour Brochures:** Anne Kent said they were coming along nicely and that we would be placing them in short term rentals and with real estate agents. Nora Sanders explained about the **Hike Ontario** event this Sunday starting at Glover Park at 10:30 and progressing to the Smith's Mill.

6. **Heritage Question of the Month**

Question: Where was White's Station on the L&PS railway and what is there now? Several knew the answer which was at Fruit Ridge Line and they store a caboose there now. We gave the mug to Bradley Roberts one of our guest speakers.

7. **Tentative Future meetings:**

date	location	topic	Speaker
October 23	Alma Villa	Interview videos	Nora & David
November 27	Riva	Industrial harbour	Dan McNeil
December 11	Alma Villa	programme to be announced	All

8. **Heritage Announcements**

Joan Clayton announced the Jane Austin display at Western University in the Archive Library just off the Weldon Library which will be up for 3 months.

Sally Martyn described a petition she has brought from the ACO to encourage the provincial government to give grants to heritage property owners to turn heritage buildings into housing rather than tear the buildings down. The petition was circulated.

Sally also announced the fall heritage feast in Sparta November 8th featuring 1952 and the Stork Club with an 8 piece brass band and food of the period. She encouraged people to their reserve tickets as they are going quickly.

9. **Feature Presentation:** Ben (father) and Bradley (son) Roberts on the L&PS railway

Ben gave the exact location of White's Station and said the one at the County Building was called Craft. Bradley showed photos of the original White's Station as well as many other photos as his father

talked.

The L&PS started in 1853 by the London Railroad Company and ran until 1966 when CN bought them out. It took three years to lay the 24.6 miles of track with labourers from Scotland and Ireland. The first train from the Richmond and Bathurst Station in London to the Beach Station in Port Stanley ran on July 6th 1856 and was powered by diesel locomotives. There was a freight terminal at the lake edge where lumber from Canada was shipped to the USA and the Americans shipped us coal. Freight cars were loaded directly onto the ferry and off onto the tracks. At the Beach Station passengers could then take the incline railway up to picnic hill for 5 cents. The incline railway cars are in St. Thomas at the Railway Museum but may eventually come back to Port Stanley.

In 1887 there was a bad accident in St. Thomas where a freight train hit an L&PS passenger train and 27 people were killed. As a result a BX tower was installed. It is still there but serves no trains as CN tore out the tracks. It was locked when the last worker there, Charlie Beckett died and no one knew where the key was. It was found recently and St. Thomas is planning to restore the tower as a tourist attraction.

Just north of Port Stanley is the Zavitz bridge which was hit by the tornado in 1990 and not damaged. It just bounced off the bridge.

In 1913, Sir Adam Beck, mayor of London decided to electrify the L&PS which London paid for and the train became very profitable from the 1920s to the 1940s. There were special cars ordered that featured Tiffany glass and were twice as long as regular cars with driving abilities at each end so they didn't need a turn table to go in the opposite direction. The even numbered cars were powered at both ends and the odd numbered cars were only trailer cars. In the 1940s, during the war the trains were very busy serving the RCAF training station at Craft station and White's station. Freight slowed after the war. Passenger tour trains started in 1956 but passenger service stopped in 1957 due to everyone owning cars. Some freight service continued until 1966 when CN bought them out. CN tore out all the electrical towers but continued to service the Ford plant and the grain silos in Port Stanley. In 1976 there was a big washout just north of Union and CN abandoned their train service. After 5 years of negotiations the PSTR purchased the section from St. Thomas to Port Stanley and began their service in June of 1984 run entirely by volunteers. It runs from the Bridge Station to St. Thomas. They restored the old station as well. They own L1 and L5 of the original electric box cabs and several cars including the 1937 passenger car we are sitting in for our meeting.

David thanked Ben and Bradley for their great presentation and gave them a donation for the PSTR for preserving this important part of Port Stanley's history.

The meeting adjourned at 8:30.

The next meeting is October 23 at 1:30 at Alma Villa with samplings of the oral histories that have been recorded and edited.

Secretary: Sally Martyn

Chair: David Russell