

THE HISTORY OF COBOURG HARBOUR

THE TRANSITION YEARS

In 1875, the Cobourg, Peterborough and Marmora Railway and Mining Company suffered a financial collapse and shipments of lumber and iron ore to Cobourg dwindled. The lumber mills in Harwood eventually closed and attempts were made to popularize the journey to Rice Lake with tourists. But due to high maintenance expenses, the rail line was forced to close and by 1895 it had become largely a storage siding.

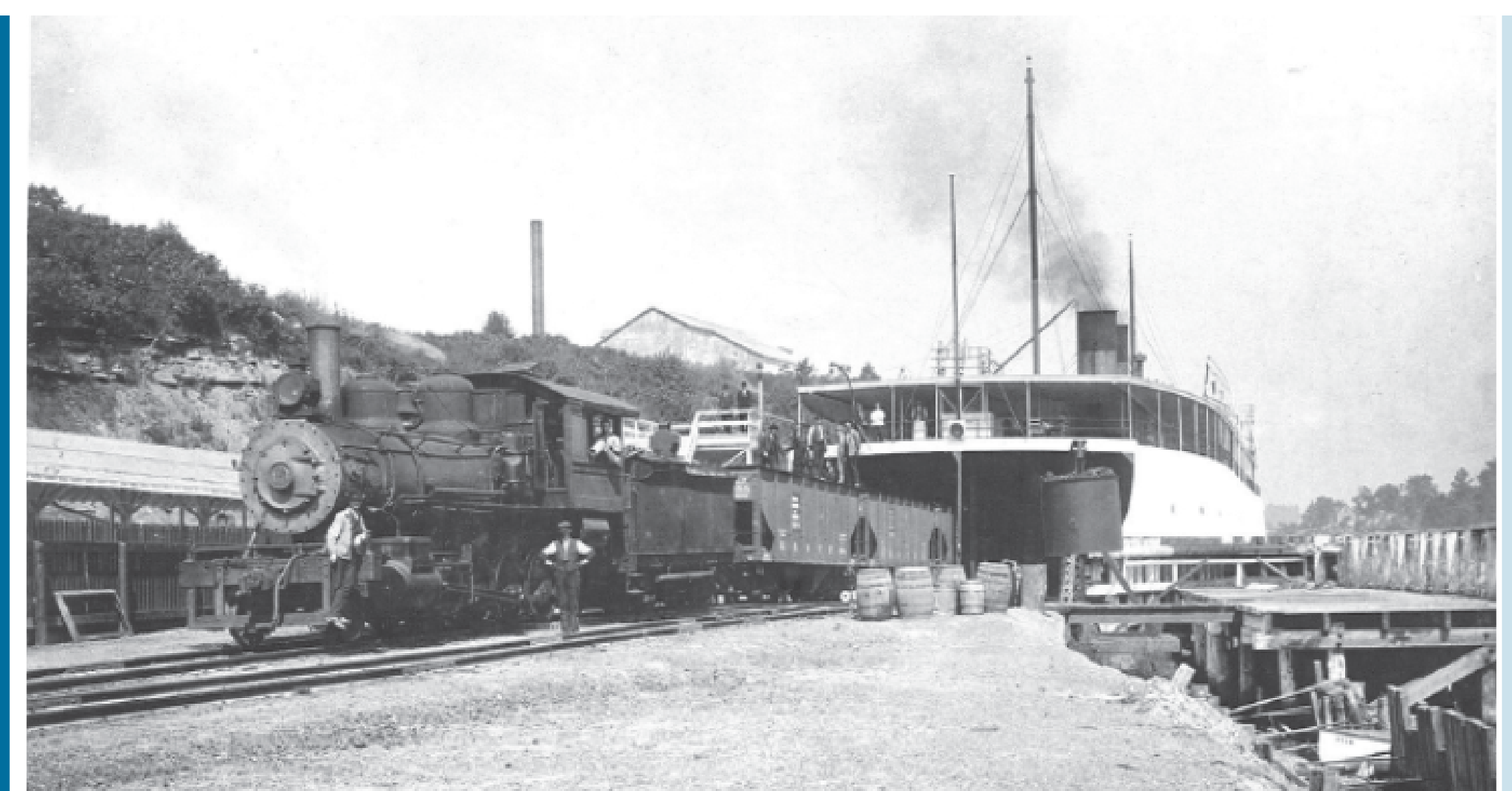
At the beginning of the twentieth century, Cobourg was a quiet and beautiful community of just under 5,000 residents. Although its days as an important economic centre were over, the Town still had several large factories and flourishing businesses and merchants.

For Cobourg's harbour, the halcyon days of sail were declining as steamships replaced schooners and the railway became a more important and efficient means of transporting goods.

In 1905 a change in the fortunes of the harbour occurred. The Ontario Car Ferry Company was formed as a joint venture between the Grand Trunk Railway of Montreal and the Buffalo, Rochester and Pittsburg Railroad – this was to breathe new life into the harbour!

The new company was formed for the primary purpose of transporting coal from Pennsylvania to Cobourg. The GTR wanted this coal for their locomotives. Rochester, New York was the immediate choice for the southern terminus with excellent docking facilities and railway lines at Port Charlotte. Cobourg was eventually chosen as the northern terminus because it was located directly north of Rochester and was in close proximity to the raw materials to be shipped south. The south-bound cargoes were feldspar, lumber, pulpwood and flour.

A contract to build the required ferry was awarded to the Canadian Shipbuilding Company of Toronto. Ontario No. 1 was launched in April 1907. This was a significant occasion for the Town of Cobourg which had visions of becoming a major port once again.



A Brooks 8-2 switcher engine here used to load/unload the ferry. Some of the later accommodations for freight & passengers show at the left. The building at the top of the photo is the feldspar plant.

The Ontario No. 1 had a steel hull, twin-funnels and twin screws for propulsion. She was a handsome vessel, always painted a spotless glowing white with two raked stacks, buff with black tops. She was licensed by the Government to carry 100 passengers. The passenger deck had staterooms and cabins, a dining salon and large parlour, a music room as well as a ladies' lounge and rest room.

By 1914, the success of the Ontario No. 1 was firmly established and the demand, especially on the northbound crossings, warranted another vessel. The Ontario No. 2 was built by Polson Iron Works Ltd. of Toronto and was launched on April 3, 1915. Her capacity and layout for the coal cars was similar to that of Ontario No. 1, and the accommodations were almost identical.

COMPARISON OF ONTARIO #1 & #2

	ACE (#1)	DEUCE (#2)		ACE (#1)	DEUCE (#2)
Gross Weight - in tons	5,146	5,568	Draught - in feet	18.7	16
Beam - in feet	54.2	56	Length - in feet	317	318
# of Rail Hoppers Carried	28	30	Cost - in \$	375,000	423,333