

Designated on April 12, 2013 - By-law 2013-052


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Portage Landing on Moon River

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Legal Description

PIN 48029-0638 Pt. Lot 33, Con. 7 Wood; Pt. Lane PL3 Wood abutting the E limit of Lot 21 PL3 Wood; Pt. Lot 55 PL5 Wood; Pt. Lot 15-20 PL2 Wood; Pt. Bed of the Moon River adjacent to Lot 33, Con 7 Wood as in DM320594; DM76318; Muskoka Lakes

Property Description

Portage Landing on Moon River is a portage site and rest area on the island between the north and south channels of the Bala Falls, in Bala, west of Highway 169, at the shore of the Moon River and next to Crown property abutting the North Bala Falls. is surrounded by water on two sides, the channel of South Bala Falls and the Moon River and includes a steep embankment to the east to the edge of Highway 169.

Statement of Cultural Heritage Value or Interest

Portage Landing on Moon River is the traditional portage used by First Nations people and later by tourists, YMCA campers and cottagers. It defines and supports the character of Bala as a water based summer resort and the vista looking westward from the property is breathtaking.

The property's cultural value and interest lies in the features which support its historic and continuous use as a portage landing and scenic outlook point; the natural shoreline, Precambrian Shield outcroppings, the flat rock resting area at the water's edge and natural footpaths, native trees, grasses, wildflowers, the slight elevation above water level along with the absence of artificial lighting and buildings enhance the scenic experience.

Portage Landing on Moon River has historical and associative value for the Bala community and nearby Mohawk natives as part of the traditional portage for more than 100 years. It is found in early and contemporary postcard views and tourist accounts of the area, The eddying of the water of both falls pushes watercraft towards this natural landing point. As part of a long established canoe route from the Musquosh and Moon Rivers to Lake Muskoka, the portage was passed and identified by the explorer/cartographer David Thompson as part of his mapping of the Muskoka region starting in 1830, and is also associated with the Mohawk relocation from Oka Quebec to the Gibson Reserve, now Wahta Territory, for religious reasons, in October, 1881

Portage Landing on Moon River's contextual value lies in its relation to the important theme associated with the broader cultural landscape of Bala, tourism, and to a lesser degree transportation. In addition to its portage function, the property has public park functions including scenic enjoyment, picnicking, and photography. The historical split trunk maple tree (Native Maker Tree) on the adjacent property can be seen from the landing, and appears in many historic photos. Portage Landing on Moon River connects to the shortest portage route across lands informally named both Portage Island and Burgess Island, that is across Crown Land up the side of the concrete abutment at the North Bala Falls, and across Highway 169, to the portage landings on Lake Muskoka. The portage and scenic experience is enhanced by the sound and spray from cascading waters over both channels of the Bala Falls, as well as unobstructed views to and from the Moon River, across the north and south channels of the Bala Falls, and towards Margaret Burgess Park.

Description of Heritage Attributes

The heritage attributes essential to the cultural heritage value or interest of this property are the features which support its traditional public functions as a landing and launching point for canoeing and portaging, as well as other recreational activities, such as enjoying scenic views and picnicking ("park"). Heritage attributes of this park include:

- Flat rock with sloped launching area into the water. The flat granite rock naturally sloped into the water serves as a landing and launch area for watercraft.
- Evolved features including flat areas and a beach partially covered in stone, which may have originated as tailings at the former hydro electric generating station or as fill during the highway and bridge construction.

- Presence of trees, grasses, wildflowers, and other vegetation, natural or introduced.
- Natural geography and unobstructed shoreline on the southern and western sides of the property.
- Scenic views which have been enjoyed for over a hundred years, including unobstructed views to the historic split trunk maple tree (Native Marker Tree), North Bala Falls and the north rocky shore, to the channel of South Bala Falls, to the bridges either side, the southern shoreline of Moon River, and expansive westward view of the Moon River.
- Absence of artificial lighting and buildings.

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