



Severn River, Ontario:

At Big Chute near Georgian Bay, the Severn River drops 60 ft. over a rugged, sloping rock channel which caused the construction of a 'tramway' to serve recreational boaters as well as a triple turbine hydroelectric generating station dating from 1909. The station was expanded over time to suit local power demand but was eventually decommissioned due to dated, inefficient equipment. Because of the generating station's siting along the heavily-traveled waterway, particularly the prominent 'surge tower', Ontario Hydro decided to maintain elements of this heritage structure as they considered options for redevelopment of the site using modern generating equipment.

Following development of the hydroelectric engineering, The Colborne Architectural Group was retained by Hydro to contribute to the visual design of the new generating station, integrating this with the heritage building. The architectural solution adopted three approaches; to save as many heritage elements as possible; to reinterpret components of the old station in a 'modern' way; and to create a public place by turning the new generating station into a passive museum, displaying the past and present of hydroelectric generating technology. The result is a sequence of discoveries for the visiting public as they make their way along a boardwalk to the site; the 'ruin' in the forest; an array of generating 'relics' spread across an open plaza; and finally, from a cantilevered walkway passing across the face of the new structure, the view of the massive new turbine buried deep in the pre-Cambrian rock. Construction cost, \$700K, 1993 (architectural elements only).