

# Koksilah River Truss Bridge

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**Location:** Koksilah Road and River Road, Cowichan Station

**Formal Recognition:** November 9, 2016

**Construction Dates:** 1939



## Statement of Significance for Koksilah River Truss Bridge

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### *Description of Historic Place*

The Koksilah River Truss Bridge is a one-lane, rare timber bridge with a Howe truss configuration located at Koksilah Road near Riverside Road. The current bridge was erected in 1939. It replaced the original bridge, built in 1876, which was extensively damaged from a major winter flood in 1934.

### *Heritage Values*

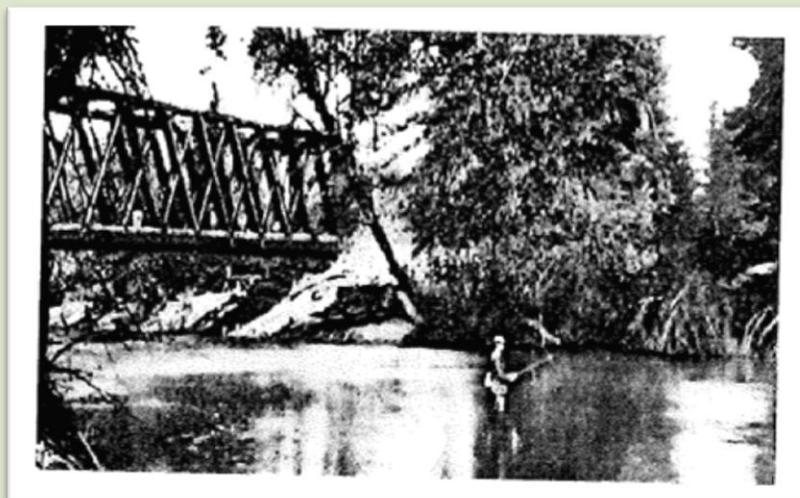
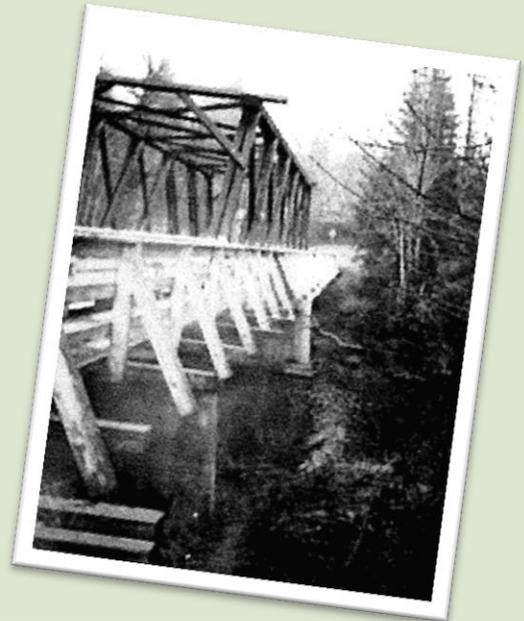
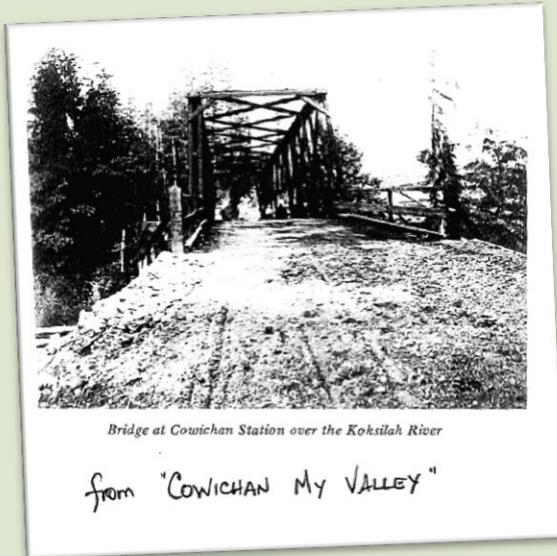
The bridge is emblematic of the way European settlers made their livelihoods within the Cowichan Station. The earliest European settlers to the Cowichan area arrived on boat via the HMS Hecate into Cowichan Bay. Until the construction of the bridge, they waded through the Koksilah River or crossed by log with their possessions and food rations. William Shearing, one of the original settlers of the area, built Koksilah Road and the original bridge. It allowed the movement of goods, unloaded in Cowichan Bay, to reach the settlers in the area. It also allowed for the movement of lumber, stone from the Koksilah Quarry, and ore from one of the 19 established mines in the area, to be transported from Cowichan to Victoria. The Koksilah river truss bridge may be the only Howe truss bridge remaining on Vancouver Island.

## Character-Defining Elements

The Koksilah bridge is a one-way timber Howe truss design with an adjoining pedestrian walkway. Massachusetts resident William Howe patented the design for the Howe truss in 1840. Bridges of this design combine diagonal timber compressions members with vertical iron rods and were more suitable for longer spans than previous truss designs had been. Howe truss bridges are increasingly rare as most timber bridges in North America have been replaced.

## Timeline

- 1862 Earliest settlers arrived in Cowichan Bay and either waded in the water or crossed by log over the Koksilah River to transport food and possessions
- 1876 Original Koksilah River Bridge is erected
- 1886 Cowichan Station was founded with the opening of a hotel, post office, blacksmith shop, and community hall.
- 1931 & 1934 Winter storms causes significant damage to bridge
- 1939 New Bridge is erected



**The original Koksilah River Truss Bridge**