PART ONE

THE MAIN STREET STORY

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Fur Trade and Indian Trails

From the time of Jacques Cartier, the fur trade was a major enterprise in Canada and was a dominating factor in the exploration of the country. The Hudson Bay Company was founded in 1670 by charter from King Charles II of England. Later, the formation of the North West Trading Company by Scottish and French merchants with headquarters in Montreal, dominated the government. They considered the natural riches of the land to be a monopoly of the Company. The competition of the two companies was intense, and following the end of the American Revolution in 1783, they anticipated intrusion by the traders from the south.

Exploration was pushed in every direction. The object of the search was to find a shorter route to the north and west as an alternative to the Ottawa River.

Along the north shore of Lake Ontario there were several streams and rivers which, when followed to their source, led into a network of overland Indian trails which eventually merged at the Holland River and Lake Simcoe thus eliminating the 900 mile trek up the Ottawa River or the alternative route through Lake Erie and the Detroit River.

The fur trade was a predominant factor in the early development of new markets which evolved in the founding of NEWMARKET.