



GEORGE
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Village of Little Buffalo has many tales in store

Ohsweken

Little Buffalo store and restaurant is situated on the southern boundary of the Six Nations Reserve, where Chiefswood Road crosses Indian Line. It is owned and operated by former Chief Councillor Wellington Staats.

This particular corner had been called Little Buffalo since before the 1930's when it was mentioned on a land transfer agreement. An old map in the Historical Atlas of Haldimand and Norfolk County dated 1877-1879, called the cross roads New Buffalo.

No one now living has any idea how the "Buffalo" got into the name.

When I was a boy, Little Buffalo Store was directly across the road from its present site. This meant that instead of being on the reserve, it was in the township of Walpole.

ANCIENT ROAD

Before the reserve was divided into blocks of land with the resulting road grid, in the 1800s an old road stretched from the Grand River through the present day Silver Star corner. Near Boston Creek the road curved west past Little Buffalo, then Hartford and on toward Detroit.

It was probably the remains of a trail system used by the Neutral Nations who inhabited this area before the arrival of Europeans in North America.

I remember following traces of this ancient trail, through the woods to Little Buffalo, when I was a boy. It joined the present Chiefs-

wood Road at a bend about half a mile from Little Buffalo. It was a good short cut from our house to the store.

It was a typical country store. In front was a wide stoop and veranda supported by four wooden pillars. Two large glass windows, where merchandise could be displayed, took up most of the front of the building.

Outside were gas pumps and inside were groceries, hardware, clothing and numerous other articles.

Bill and Gert Sloat lived next door to the store until it was demolished in 1979. In fact, away back in 1919, Bill's parents, George and Mabel Sloat, had the store. They sold it to George and Mary Wellsby in 1921.

Bill remembers a band of gypsies who used to camp along the road near the store.

They used to hobble their horses by putting their front legs in grain bags. This prevented them from wandering away when they were turned loose to eat the grass by the road. The horses had to move in little hops like rabbits.

STORE OWNERS

In those days before paved roads were even thought of, a wooden sidewalk stretched beside the road all the way to the hill near Tony Giles' farm.

Back then there were lots of houses along the road which are now gone. Sam Curley had a garage nearby to repair cars but he moved.

By the 1930s the sidewalk was gone. In 1937, Sid and Matilda Richardson bought the store.

The last owners were Charles and Laura Kersey who assumed ownership in 1946. They ran the store until 1977. By then, they lived in a more comfortable house next door and their children Lorne and Janice were married.

In 1979, Mr. and Mrs. Kersey were killed in a tragic car and truck crash. The same year the old Little Buffalo Store was demolished. Soon after, the newer and bigger Little Buffalo Store opened across the road. The Little Buffalo saga continues.

Our Town is an Expositor feature which provides a forum for news and views from some of the smaller centres in the region. George Beaver is a freelance writer who lives on the Six Nations reserve.