

HAMILTON -- BEFORE 1832

Previous to 1823 Hamilton extended west to Queen St. and east to Wellington St. The latter was known as Lovers Lane and ended in the only wharf.

The site of Hamilton was broken being traversed by numerous creeks which took their rise at the foot of the mountain, thence winding their way to the Bay. Clay hills covered by scrubby pine and undulating plains occupied the spaces between creeks. There are those now living (1885) who remember speckled trout being caught in a creek at the rear of the Boys Home, Stinson and Erie Ave. and another at the corner of King and Jarvis St. and people who have seen canoes and skiffs in a third creek near the corner of James and Gore Sts. which creek was navigable thence to the bay. The only son of Sir Allan MacNab lost his life by the accidental discharge of his gun while leaping across the same stream, near the corner of Hughson and Augusta Sts.

A gentleman recently passed away who had gathered apples on the ground on which the City Hall now stands. (Market Square) and hoed corn and potatoes where the Court House stands, and shot pigeons in the fields at the present corner of James and Main Sts.

The corner of King and Wellington was the location of the first tavern, first school and first church. First regular church erected at the corner of Wellington and Main on land given by Robert Land in 1822. Dedicated in 1824. First internment was that of Samuel Price, Tavern Keeper, in 1822.

Those portions of the beautiful undulating plain between the mountain and Lake Ontario where the City of Hamilton now stands on which the forest was not too dense, were covered by buffalo grass from three to nine feet in height. Interspersed here and there by the log cabins of settlers. This rank vegetation has long since disappeared and like its contemporary the Red Indian, will have been a thing of the past, both disappearing before the presence of the white man.

Dundas St. was built in 1811. Hamilton laid out in 1813, Canal completed in 1825, first road from Hamilton to the Bay was cut in 1829.

Builders of the Burlington Canal were, Capt. John McKeen and James G. Strobbridge, both buried at the southeast corner of King and Wellington Sts. Edward Jackson, Richard and Samuel Hatt removed from Ancaster to Hamilton on the completion of the canal. In 1846 canal was widened and they brought stone for the piers from the north mountain near Waterdown and built a tramway. This tramway was bought by Andrew Miller who had a project to dig a canal from the bay, up the ravine, between Caroline and Bay Sts. to the intersection of the latter street with York St.

It is said that he obtained 13 acres of land from Hess and Kirken-dall at a very small price, chief consideration being that he should dig the canal. When people became impatient at this slow progress he said he would complete the job by the date on his deed, but upon examination there was no date on his deed.

For a long time Mountain road, now John St., was the only road leading from Hamilton to the brow of the mountain. On it were built some of Hamilton's first stores notably N.E. corner of Jackson, kept by Rolston and S.E. by Sheldon. Later someone opened up James St. to the Mountain top and celebrated with great eclat, saying it would draw all the business from Ancaster at the expense of John St. and sowed John with grass seed, and employing a farmer to sow it, until halted by showers of rotten eggs from the log jail at the corner directly opposite the present court house.

This log jail, erected in 1801, leaving room for pillory and stocks in front. The fire-station bell was purchased from Troy, N.Y. in 1836 for 100 pounds and was the first debenture ever issued by the Town of Hamilton and father of the city debt. It first swung from a belfry on John St's little wooden church (shown in pictures of early Hamilton), in 1840 removed to the roof of the building on King Wm. St. present fire station, 1874 moved to clock tower of old market house and city hall and in 1888 placed in the fire-hall tower.

B.E.

..... from paper of Bro. Charlton

First settlers were south of Main St. James Mills owned all the land west of Queen, Peter Hamilton, Queen to James, George Hamilton, James to Mary, Richard Springer, Mary to Wellington, Ephraim Land, (Ferguson or Cherry) Wellington to Wentworth.

North of Main St. Peter Hess owned all west of Bay St. Samuel Kirkendall, from Bay St. to James, Nathaniel Hughson from James to Mary, Archibald Ferguson from Mary to Wellington, Robert Land, Wellington to Emerald and Abel Land, from Emerald to Wentworth.

History of Barton Lodge, 1895, Page 156 etc.

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Personal Paper*