

Wheatley's Story



Lake St. North; now Erie St. N. in 1907

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

It would be most difficult to name all the people who have contributed information for this book. Some of the material was obtained during another research project sponsored by Canada Manpower, when Marguerite Carter, and Gail Tofflemire assisted me in compiling the history of commercial Fishing in the Wheatley area in 1977.

The summer of 1981 found two Wheatley students, Marna Simmons and Cheryl Bridgeman, involved in researching the history of Wheatley with a Young Canada Works grant. Historical information was obtained through the use of the micro-film files of the Wheatley Journal, the library facilities at Wheatley, Leamington, Chatham, Windsor and the Public Archives in Toronto. Many senior residents have given of their time and their recollections to assist in compiling the material for this project. To all these people and to all others who have helped in many ways, my heartfelt thanks and appreciation.

Rita Lobzun,

Wheatley, Ont. - 1982

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Wheatley
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PREFACE

WHEATLEY'S STORY

Where in the world is Wheatley? This comment has often been heard by many residents as they journey to other places. Their answer might be: "It's near Windsor, an hour's drive southeast of Detroit, or down in southwestern Ontario.

In the annals of Canadian history, there is little mention of tiny hamlets, villages and towns, unless a memorable event such as a battle, a discovery, a distinguished person's birth, or a great tragedy took place there. None of these happenings occurred here, but the village has a unique history of its own and worthy of recording. The pioneers of one hundred years ago were not interested in seeking fame or fortune but mainly concerned with progress and a better life for all. Through industry, and development in the commercial fishing industry, the village came to be known as the "Fresh Water Fish Capital of the World".

A complex of buildings owned by Omstead Foods and built for the purpose of storing frozen fish vegetables and fruit, became the largest in Canada.

Nelson Wood Products was the largest firm of its kind in Canada.

Wheatley, a village with a population of 1600, has gained recognition throughout the world in the field of medicine, nature and conservation, beauty competition, food and agriculture. These achievements were made possible because of contributions by residents of this community.

With my humble efforts, I have pieced together the information gathered from the notes of previous historians, family records and albums, gleanings from the Wheatley Journal, and memories of the older residents.

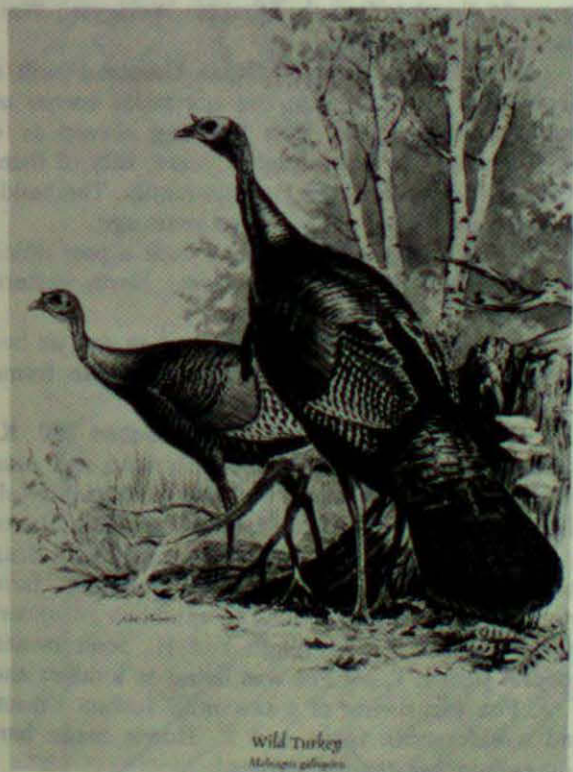
It is my hope that through this book, the present and future generations of this community, will come to know a little more about Wheatley's history and its proud heritage.

Rita Lobzun
June, 1982

THE EARLY YEARS

Prior to the arrival of white settlers in the vicinity now known as Wheatley, the area contained a small population of Indians, thought to be the remaining few descendants of a large nation called the Attawandrons or "Neutrals", a name bestowed on them by the French. These people were considered experts in the art of carving arrowheads, spear points, tomahawks and other weapons used for hunting and warfare. The flint beds located along the Lake Erie shoreline provided the material, a hard stone, for these purposes. Today, these artifacts are occasionally found by area farmers as they turn the soil and discover weapons and tools of an ancient world.

The nineteenth - century natives of the area lived a quiet and peaceful existence in the woods and marshy lands near the lakeshore and the creek banks. They hunted and fished for their requirements each day as there was no need to store or to hoard large quantities of food. The dense forest filled with wild game, and the waters of Lake Erie, teeming with fish, provided an abundance of food. Their diets were enhanced by varieties of wild berries.



Wild Turkey
Meleagris gallopavo

Wild turkeys, plentiful in the early days of settlement along the Talbot Road.

As white settlement developed, many Indians left the area to join other tribes or to become integrated into the white communities. Those who

stayed, taught the settlers some of the skills of their trade, and shared their knowledge and great wisdom in the use of herbs for cooking and medicinal purposes. In exchange for this information, pioneers repaid them with neighbourly kindness, a home-cooked meal, shelter, and other provisions. "Squire" John Lamarsh, a Talbot Road pioneer, was noted for his ability to communicate with the Indians and render assistance if they sought him out for advice.

The early hardware stores carried an ample stock of neatly woven baskets and master-crafted axe handles, fashioned by the natives.

The beginning of construction on the south-western portion of the Talbot Road took place about 1818. During the first decade of the nineteenth century, surveying had been carried out but the War of 1812 caused a delay in the plans. Col. Mahlon Burwell, the chief surveyor, was hired by Col. Thomas Talbot, a British officer and a land developer, to supervise the construction of the road which eventually stretched over three hundred miles along the shoreline of Lake Erie in Southern Ontario. When completed, the road was said to be the best in Ontario.

The route chosen by the surveyers followed the path of a well-travelled Indian trail on a gravel ridge. From the eastern limits of the present village of Wheatley, was the Five Mile Woods area. This section was so dense that persons travelling through found themselves in darkness even in daytime, for the sun's rays could not penetrate through the lofty branches of the massive oak, ash, maple and walnut trees.

As soon as the Talbot Road was completed, settlers began to arrive, taking up their Crown lands. Richard Wheatley was the first to locate near the Essex - Kent County line, arriving in 1832 from England. His property was on Lot 218, Talbot Road south in Essex County. Other families - the Lamarshes, Juliens, Ivisons and Derbyshires, also located nearby and built their homes out of logs from the virgin forest.

The Shaw family arrived in the early 1840's to take up their land, south of the Talbot Road on the shores of Lake Erie. The western end of the Pulley Road was the site often referred to by oldtimers as "Shaw's Landing", marking the spot where the Shaws arrived by boat to settle on their Crown property.

The largest concentration of settlers appears to have been in the southern portion of the area, due to the lake being the easiest route for travel and transporting goods; for the Talbot Road was at times impassable in sections. In spite of hardships, endured by the pioneers, there was an abundance of food available - wild turkeys, deer and rabbit were there for the taking, along with various species of fish in the lake.

William McLean, established a commercial

fishery on his property in Romney township near the county line on Lake Erie's shore in 1857. A man, noted for his ambitious and industrious nature, he also built a wooden dock and storage facilities for shipping grain products produced by the local farmers. This service encouraged the settlers to produce crops in greater volume. Others also set up commercial fishing operations, and soon the shoreline was dotted for miles with nets and poles during the spring and the fall. Fishing provided a supplement to their income, for the majority were farmers too.

In time, the settlement became known as Pegtown, but little evidence can be found as to why this name was chosen. There are two legends concerning this matter which have aroused the curiosity of present day residents.

During the mid-nineteenth century, the majority of homes were in the lakeshore area. Due to the low-lying marshlands, the wooden dwellings were constructed above ground and supported by posts or "pegs" as they were sometimes called. This created a "pegtown look".

Another story tells of the many cobblers who resided in this crossroads community. The newly-built Talbot Road was attracting many travellers who frequently journeyed on foot and stopped for food and shelter at the tiny hamlet. Their shoes were hand-made of leather with the soles attached by tiny wooden pegs. After miles of walking, the soles would become detached and required them to be "pegged" again.

Little Pegtown never received any recognition as a post-office, and in time, the residents became unhappy with the name, for it was sometimes mistakenly referred to as "pigtown".

A local citizen, William Buchanan, decided to take action and rename the community in honour of his late father-in-law, Richard Wheatley. He applied for permission to establish a post-office by that name and this came about in 1865.

The area continued to prosper as relatives and friends of the first brave families arrived to settle in a new land of opportunities. Among them were Derbyshires, Lamarshes, McLeans, Dales, Ivisons, Foxes, Middletons, Thompsons and Malotts.

The first store in the vicinity was located at the mouth of Yellow Creek, several miles east of Wheatley. Joseph Boosey, the owner, of Essex England, arrive in 1849 and established a busy trade. Located nearby on the creek bank was the Askew mill and a few years later, Elijah Backus constructed a grist mill.

Wheatley, in 1869, had a population of 150 residents. Seven years earlier, Thomas Dales had erected the first store in the community and two hotels, owned and operated by Jacob Julien and J. R. Thompson, were providing comfortable accommodations for weary travellers. Stages travelling through, carried passengers west as far as Windsor



Talbot Road looking east. Thomas Dales' grocery store is on the right. Extreme left is the Erie Hotel with the livery barn next door.

and east to Blenheim and Chatham. Other businesses located in Wheatley were: T. Batchelder, boots and shoes; John Calhoon, cabinet-maker; Wm. Craig, wagon-maker; Wm. Dales, carpenter; Geo. Fisher, tailor; Major F. M. Fox, saw-mill; Henry Malott, grocer; Geo. Middleton, general merchant; J. Plant, butcher; Jos. Robinson, baker; Dr. Geo. Overholt, M.D.; Ralph Foster, teacher; Elder Barnum, Baptist; Rev. L. Hooker, Wesleyan; Wm. Buchanan, postmaster.

In 1880, Daniel and Leiman Omstead built a large brick structure, on the northeast corner of Talbot and Lake St.. This building served as a general store for nearly eighty years, fifty of them being in the hands of the Hanson family. The building was demolished about fifteen years ago.

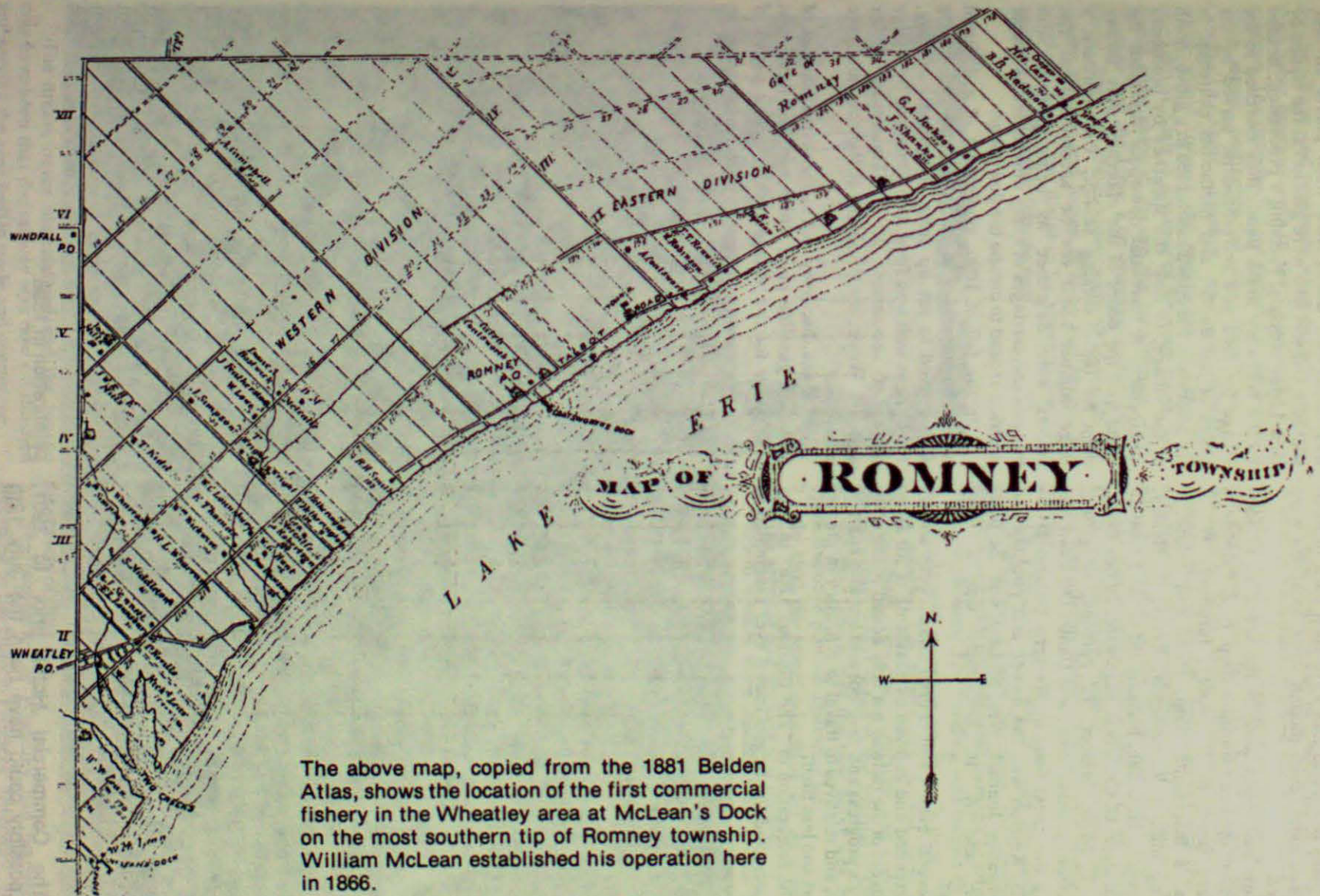
In 1882, Major Thomas Fox built a post office and telegraph office for the Great North-western Co..

A school section was established as well as two fine brick Methodist churches and a white frame Baptist church.

By 1888, the population had reached 200. K. McKenzie established a blacksmith shop and Arza Merritt was the new owner of the Commercial Hotel. Henry Dring was the proprietor of the Erie House and Dr. Geo. Chamberlain, M.D., also had a drug store. Wallace Derbyshire was building farm wagons. W. H. Mills arrived to establish an undertaking service. Lewis Wigle and H. Scott owned general stores. T. M. Fox was listed as a miller and F. J. Fox was owner of a saw mill. Joshua Gibson had a blacksmith trade and R. Howie made harnesses from oak-tanned leather.

Wheatley had all the services and facilities possible for a community of it's size and the proud residents were looking forward to the future with great hopes and dreams.

Disaster struck on July 13, 1890 when fire of unknown origin destroyed a large portion of the business section. *Note:* An account is to be found in



another chapter.

Undaunted by their loss, the merchants quickly made plans to rebuild and were soon back in business once more, even though some locations were changed.

New businesses came on the scene as T. Scott Derbyshire opened a tinsmith shop; E. J. Patnode, a jewellery store; R. E. Mosey, furniture; W. J. Martin, a blacksmith shop; Hunt and White, a planning mill; I. R. Hodgson, livery; J. Healey, jewellery; D. H. Gillan, blacksmith; G. A. Eastman, general store; G. Campbell, hardware, James Black, tailor; T. Mills, lumber; E. Parsons, drugstore, E. Hanson, general store; and Daniel Omstead was making the finest flour in Western Ontario at his mill. D. Kenyon was the owner and publisher of the Wheatley Journal, Wm. McLean was the postmaster, and A. B. Lounsbury was a busy butcher.

Several events and church affairs were always well attended and enjoyed by residents of all ages. The advent of the railway not only added to the community's progress and development but also enabled friends and relatives to travel to Wheatley in greater comfort and less time.

The celebration of "The Glorious 12th" in July 1896, attracted the largest crowd ever assembled in

Wheatley. It was estimated that over eight thousand people gathered here for the occasion. The train was filled with Orangemen from points all over southern Ontario who were greeted at the station by local Lodge officials. Forming a procession, headed by the Wheatley Brass Band, they marched to the village for food and refreshments, served by the ladies of the Baptist and Methodist churches. In the afternoon, the crowd assembled in a grove, north of the village, to hear the speeches by prominent Orangemen. A torrential downpour disrupted the event and the doors of the churches were thrown open for those seeking shelter. Unfortunately, a large number could not be accommodated. The streets were described as being jammed with buggies and carriages of every description as people scurried around to escape the downpour.

In the fall of 1896, excitement of a different nature began taking place. A natural gas drilling firm arrived to set up their equipment. January, 1897, a gas well was fired and witnessed by a large crowd of spectators. J. E. Thompson, driller and J. J. White, the president of the company were also present.

The gas discovery led to the establishment of a modern gasoline plant which supplied light, heat and power for the village residents and places of



The Commercial Hotel prior to 1901. celebration in 1896. This possibly could have been the July 12th

business and industry.

The future was looking bright and prosperous for the village and residents were eagerly awaiting for further developments in the Two Creeks Canal scheme. The proposed plans called for the building of a canal beginning at the mouth of Two Creeks, a short distance east of Wheatley, which would connect the waterways of Lake Erie and Lake St. Clair, a distance of fourteen miles. This would allow ships to escape the treacherous Pelee Passage and the Lime Kiln crossing in the Detroit River. Both of these areas were responsible for severe damage and losses of lives and cargo. The canal was to cut the distance by seventy-five miles and save considerable time as well.



Note the post mark. The card was addressed to Mrs. Will Maxwell, Empire Hotel, Calgary.

Representatives from Romney, namely: H. A. Onley, Mr. Henry, Reeve Fox, George and Alfred Coatsworth, met with officials from Tilbury to discuss the plans. A later meeting was held in Gibson's Hall, at which an agreement to build was reached. Details were sent in to the Engineering News for publication.

The dream never materialized and the reason may have been that the railway was now established and serving the area well in trade and commerce.

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

A new century and new beginnings for several Wheatley merchants marked the year 1900. Frank Epplett, having purchased the Wheatley Journal the previous year from D. Kenyon and recently married to Miss Maud Watson, was keeping the citizens posted on the development and the social activities of the community. J. D. Vizzard was the new proprietor of the flour and grist mill. John Voakes was manufacturing bricks, C. H. Potts and D. H. Gillan were building carriages and Henry Dring was offering hotel rooms at a rate of one dollar per day.

On February 25, 1901, a major fire destroyed one of Wheatley's finest buildings, the Commercial Hotel, along with considerable damage to adjoining shops and homes. The building was owned by Mrs. A. Merritt and managed by Wm. Wilson. Within a few months, the debris was cleared away and a new well-built, two-story structure was erected on the same site. It was noted in the Journal of October 5, 1901 that "the bar of the new hotel was quietly opened about 6 p.m. on Thursday last".

In 1902 the Merchants Bank set up a branch, offering services on Tuesdays and Fridays.

Storm sewers were installed on Talbot Street to eliminate the problem of mud and pools of water lying at the "four corners" following heavy rains.

Stores were open until 8 o'clock each evening excluding Saturday nights and the evening preceeding a public holiday when merchants kept business hours until 11 p.m..

Along the lakeshore, commercial fishermen were modernizing their equipment including the installation of gasoline engines in their small wooden "fishing smacks", an English term for their single or twin-masted vessels. Among them were the McLean brothers, Enoch and George, sons of Wm. McLean, the Lamarsh brothers, Josh Liddle, T. H. Maxwell, Alex Christie, N. Coles, F. D. "Daddy" Smith, W. J. Dawson, Charles Healey, "Josh" Liddle, Thos. Mills, Curtis Bros., John and Willis, Sam and Hez Bickford, and the firm, Moody and Coulson.

The Sandwich Fish Hatchery, located near the banks of the Detroit River, kept the Western Basin of Lake Erie stocked with whitefish and herring. Large volumes of fish were shipped by rail from the Pere Marquette station at Wheatley or by lake steamers, one being the "City of Dresden", a ninety-three foot former passenger ship, converted to a transport ship, owned by the Post Fishing Co. of Sandusky, Ohio. Another Post Co. vessel, the "Louise" also picked up the shipments of fish from the area fishermen's boats, a short distance from shore. Wheatley's port lacked docking facilities for vessels of their size.

The population of Wheatley had reached 500 according to the Ontario Farmers' Directory. Oyster

suppers (Reynold's Bakery kept a fresh supply of these delicacies), chicken suppers, and church picnics in the summer, enhanced the social life of the residents, keeping everyone in touch with each other and providing the opportunity for new residents to get acquainted.



Lawn bowling on the Greens in the early 1900's. Now the Daudlin property on Foster Street.

In 1904, James Reynolds installed a gasoline-powered plant in his bakery and other merchants soon followed with the same idea. The new system was a great improvement over the former method of lighting with coal oil lamps and the use of wood or coal for heat.

The construction of large brick buildings to replace the old wooden structures, gave Wheatley the look of a modern, progressive village. D. H. Dean was operating his livery service from his new brick barn (now the Wheatley Community Hall). J. H. Healey was conducting a jewellery business and James Reynolds was delivering his bakery products by horse and wagon. Coal was being advertised by O. Iverson at \$6.75 a ton, delivered.

The Wheatley Bargain Store of Stewart Anderson was purchased by E. Hanson. E. J. Williams was constructing sidewalks and a daily banking service was introduced.

W. I. Wemp purchased the Vizzard Flour Mill in 1905 and successfully operated it for a number of years.



Talbot St. looking East. Circa 1908

In 1906, E. Omstead acquired the general store business of the Whitney Bros. on the corner of Talbot West and Lake Street North. Streets were brightened by gaslight lamps that year and construction of the I.O.O.F. Hall took place.

E. Hanson, anxious to serve his customers with all the merchandise and facilities possible in a general store business, added an addition to his building, and in 1908 held an official opening to mark the occasion. The stock included dry goods, clothing, boots and shoes, floor coverings, groceries, crockery, and an elevator, making it one of the most modern and convenient stores in the district.

In 1909, a prominent Wheatley resident was awarded the contract to build the Romney Tunnel Drain. Arthur Lamarsh, a grandson of Squire John Lamarsh, arranged for the construction of the Drain which proved to be an outstanding achievement. It included the use of dynamite for the first time in that area. An earlier tunnel drain, built in the late 1890's by hand was inadequate, requiring the need of greater depth to provide better drainage.

The improvement in drainage for the area's agricultural land, resulted in the development of some of the best productive land in the district, and Wheatley was able to reap it's share of the profits through trade and commerce.



Erie St. north. Circa 1910

The Union Bank established a branch in the village in 1910 and in later years, Harry Chute and Grant Brown served on the staff. Also, in 1910, an old landmark disappeared from the village scene as the Erie House was torn down after half a century of service. W. J. Inman was operating a store in the I.O.O.F. block and the Wheatley Telephone Co. installed their equipment in the Healey Block. Three millinery parlours held openings that year with dressmaking services also available.

The year 1912 marked the construction of the new Government Pier, the grading of the road to the pier, the installation of the new electric plant and the addition of modern street lighting to replace the old gas lamps.



A fishery and the Government Pier.

Livery businesses changed hands as Harvey Getty took over from drayman, O. Ivison; James and George Moody purchased D. H. Gillan's, and W. E. Dean sold his to G. E. Heatherington.

In 1913, the Wheatley Journal was issued from their new location on Talbot Street West where it remains today. The Beaver Gas and Oil Company, installed a new pipeline to serve additional customers. E. J. Williams, a masonry contractor, erected a building on the corner of Little and Chestnut for the purpose of manufacturing concrete blocks and tile. A. Smith sold his jewellery business to G. B. Hillmer, of Tilbury, and O. E. Healey sold his butcher shop to Oscar and S. J. Bickford who promptly installed an electric computing scale, the first in the village.



Summer cottages along the lakeshore.

Wheatley was now developing a reputation as one of southwestern Ontario's most progressive villages. The Pere Marquette Railway served the area with good connections east and west; commercial fishermen were building more boats to extend their operations and the Southern Land Company had acquired 1200 acres of property south of the village. Their plans were to produce large

quantities of fruit and vegetables for a growing market.

Residents once again began making plans for the village to be incorporated. From the very beginning of the community's founding, the governing of municipal business was equally divided by the township councils of Romney and Mersea with the Kent - Essex County line as the divisional boundary. Wheatley was, for geographical purposes, listed in Essex County.

Public meetings were held in Gibson's Hall and a committee chosen to take the necessary steps. Maps were drawn up outlining the village boundaries and displayed in Hillmer's window for the viewing public.

The following application was presented to the Ontario Legislature:

Application to Parliament

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that application will be made to the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Ontario at the next ensuing session thereof, by Petition, on behalf of the inhabitants of the unincorporated Village of Wheatley in the Township of Romney, in the County of Kent and the Township of Mersea, County of Essex, and that portion of the said Townships adjoining the said Village, hereinafter set out, for an Act incorporating the said Village of Wheatley under the name of "The Corporation of the Village of Wheatley", separate and apart from the Township of Romney and the Township of Mersea, and to form a part of the County of Kent.

The said Corporation of the Village of Wheatley shall comprise and consist of:

All that portion of Lots Numbers Four, Five and Six, and all that portion of Lot Number Seven lying West of the East Branch of Two Creeks in the Second Concession of the Township of Romney, and all of Lot Number Six and all that part of Lot Number Seven lying West of the East Branch of Two Creeks, to a point ten rods North of and parallel with the Pere Marquette Railway, and the Northerly parts of Lots Four and Five in the First Concession of the said Township of Romney, the said part being bounded on the North by the road between the First and Second Concession; on the East by the East Branch of Two Creeks; on the South by a line parallel with and forty-four rods South of the said First and Second Concession road, and on the West by the County Line between the Counties of Kent and Essex; and all the East Half of Lot Number Two Hundred and Eighteen, and the Northerly twenty-five acres of the West Half of said Lot Number Two Hundred and Eighteen, South of Talbot Road in the Township of Mersea, and all that portion of Lot Number Two Hundred and Eighteen North of Talbot Road in the Township of Mersea lying South of a line ten rods North and parallel with the Pere Marquette

Railway, and the South twenty-five acres of the West Half of said Lot Number Two Hundred and Eighteen in the said Township of Mersea.

WARD STANWORTH
Solicitor for the Applicant.

Dated at Chatham
the 27th day of November, 1913

On February 19, 1914, the petition was tabled in the Provincial Assembly, and one month later, the bill for the incorporation of Wheatley was passed. Twenty-five village residents were present to witness the government's approval.

May 1st, 1914, marked the official birthday of the new village now listed in Kent County. That evening, following nominations, a vigorous campaign got underway to elect the first village council. The results were: Reeve, Major T. M. Fox, defeating James Lamarsh; Councillors, Oscar Ivison, Wm. Gosnell, T. R. Hodgson and W. H. Mills. Trustees Dr. A. M. Wilson, Duncan Campbell, M. H. Chamberlain, T. F. Epplott, O. Bickford and E. Hanson.

The beginning of World War 1 aroused strong feelings of patriotism as young men in the community volunteered to serve in the Armed Forces. Among them was W. W. Frew, who had spent four years in the village as a tinsmith. He became the first Wheatley resident to give his life and his name appears at the top of the list on the local Cenotaph. J. R. Dean was instructing troops in the Motorized Division in England and Clayton Lamarsh was writing letters to his father, Arthur Lamarsh. These were published in the Journal, describing the devastation of war and its effects. Letters were also shared by families with the weekly's readers as the servicemen expressed thanks and appreciation for the gift parcels sent by the local chapter of the Red Cross.

Clayton Lamarsh returned safely, became a prominent Chatham lawyer and the father of Judy Lamarsh, a cabinet minister for the Health and Welfare Department, in Ottawa, during the Pearson Administration. J. R. Dean also returned to establish a reputation as an inventor, an entrepreneur and one of Wheatley's most public-minded citizens.

The automobile was slowly becoming a popular vehicle and at the end of the year 1914, W. R. Crewe, the local Ford dealer, had sold fourteen cars.

In 1915, the well-known village blacksmith, W. J. Martin built a new shop on Erie North. Horses and carriages were still the most popular method of transportation, demanding a vital need for this type of service.

A drug store in the Healey Block, formerly the McDowell store, was opened in 1917 by A. C. Wilson. H. S. Derbyshire sold his confectionery and restaurant business to Stewart Campbell and Simon Bolus purchased the Commercial Hotel,

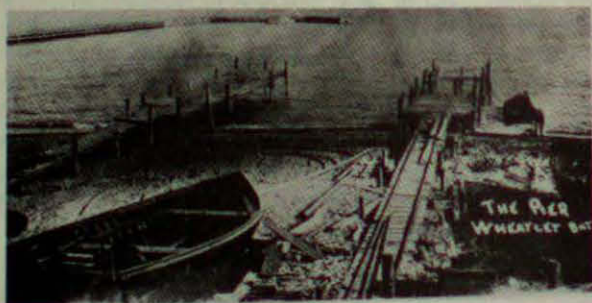
which featured a new ice-cream parlour, from O. Bickford. The hotel changed hands again shortly after when it was purchased by H. S. Derbyshire. Marshall Lounsbury moved to his new barber shop, purchased from James Hickson, and G. S. Tait remodelled his bake shop.

The population of Wheatley had reached 400 and the effects of war rations were being felt. Among the items was coal, and the allotment for the village and surrounding area was 170 tons.

In 1918, R. A. Young was selling Chevrolet cars and Arthur Lamarsh was in the general insurance business.

G. B. Hillmer sold his jewellery business to K. C. Vizzard in 1920 and George Tait became the new owner of a former restaurant and bakery on Lake Street North.

T. Maris opened a garage business and Oscar Ivison, mail carrier and express man for twenty years, sold his contracts to Horace Coulter. Grace McDonald opened a millinery shop featuring "auto-caps" and scarves for sale. W. H. Willan sold his milk delivery business to George B. Wright.



The Government Pier and fishing docks - 1920's.

In 1921, Allan Lynn purchased the hardware business of Charlesworth and Coulter; a firm still owned by the Lynn family today. Epplott Bros. were advertising Gray-Dort autos for \$700.00 and H. J. Nelson was proprietor of the Overland Garage. Yates White was operating a butcher shop and George McVittie owned and conducted a general store business.

The Commercial Hotel which frequently changed hands, was purchased in 1923 by Wm. McDonald. The year 1924 found Arthur Poulter with a new grocery, R. M. McNeillage set up as a shoemaker, Maris and Mills, trucking, and W. T. Wettlaufer as the new proprietor of a store on Erie N. formerly Geo. McVittie's.

The Naylor-Osborne Lumber Company, purchased the Jason McClellan lumber business with E. A. Naylor as manager. The Union Bank became the Royal Bank of Canada and the Bell Telephone company took over the village system with Myron



Wheatley Fair guests in 1920 - Ruby Fox, Norma Crewe, Beatrice Upcott, Lizzie Bembridge, Edith Pinch, Carrie Tofflemire, Ruby Scott, L. Chamberlain, Beatrice Hodgson.



Wheatley Continuation Class at the Wheatley Fair in the 1920's.

Gee remaining in charge. Cameron Whitesell purchased the Wemp Mill.

In 1926 the Commercial Hotel, after extensive renovations and redecorating, opened for business proudly showing off the new ballroom.

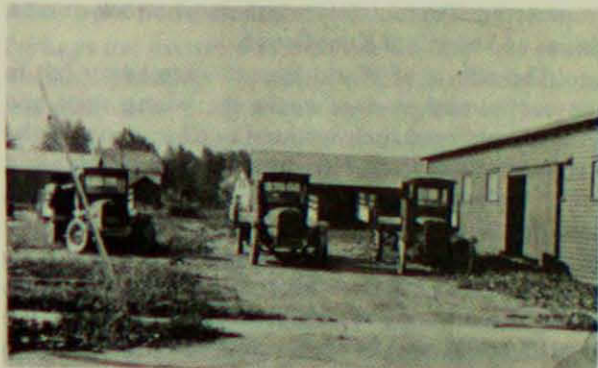
September 29, 1927 marked the official opening ceremonies for the new eight - mile stretch of pavement between Wheatley and Leamington, followed by a dinner banquet and a gala street



The old flour and grain mill on the Talbot Road East.

dance.

The year 1932 is remembered as the year of the Olde Boys' Reunion in Wheatley. This event involved many months of planning by every citizen in the community. Churches, schools, and businesses all took part in the many scheduled events and exhibits. Thousands of people gathered to celebrate the four-day event which featured a parade, boat races, contests, marching bands, sporting events and a street dance.



Delivery trucks owned by the Naylor Co. Wheatley.

J. C. Stein purchased Betts Bakery in 1932 and two years later, the Stein Bakery purchased a new V8 Ford delivery truck from E. A. Jackson for their rural bread route.

It would appear that whenever something of interest happened with regards to progress and development in the village, a street dance was a popular way to celebrate the occasion. Such was the case again, in 1938 when ceremonies marked the paving of the Wheatley townline for a distance of four and one-half miles. The remaining distance to Tilbury was completed in 1939.

The Great Depression was felt by the population with hardships experienced by many but a spirit, unmatched by other communities it's size, continued to exist. Neighbourly kindness, assistance from village council, not as welfare, but exchanged in labour, and the weekly Saturday Night Concerts headed by the Wheatley Band, gave the community a sense of pride and hope for the future.

Another public celebration which took place in 1939 was the Silver Jubilee which drew capacity crowds to the many events taking place. The Journal reported that the stores took on the appearance of "olde curiosity shoppes" as merchants displayed items of historical interest and family heirlooms loaned by their customers.

The commercial fishing operations in the Wheatley area were becoming well - known throughout North America. Bountiful catches of yellow pickerel, blue pickerel, perch, white bass, herring, whitefish and sturgeon, were being lifted from a total of ninety-six pound nets with the

majority being shipped to U.S. markets.

Improvements in the catching methods were being modernized by the installation of net pullers and pressure pumps to wash the nets. In 1940, E. Omstead installed new freezing plant equipment. Fish were packed immediately upon arrival at dockside in temperatures of 22 degrees below zero, to preserve the freshness and quality.

Reg Willett and Roy Poulter became the new owners of the Wheatley Creamery, purchasing it from Arthur Poulter, Roy's father, who took on new duties as Sherriff of Kent County.

The effects of World War II were being felt in the community as once again the young men and women answered their country's call to serve in the Armed Forces. Fred Houston, the son of Mr. and Mrs. Walter Houston, was Wheatley's first fatal casualty of the war. As men left the community to join in the service of their country, the young women became involved in the work force on the home front, taking their places in the processing plants at the local fisheries and in stores and businesses in the village.

The Wheatley Journal kept the absent service-

men and women in touch with home by sending each of them weekly copies of their paper, free of charge. Druggist Clayt Wilson kept an account of all their addresses and displayed their pictures in his store window. These same photographs were recently restored and framed by the Wheatley Kinsmen Club and are exhibited in the Community Hall. Nearby, on a square of neatly - kept lawn is a granite cenotaph listing the names of all the men of the vicinity who made the supreme sacrifice in the two wars.

The end of the war in 1945, saw the return of the veterans, many of them bringing home brides from across the sea. The Wartime Housing and Trade Board arranged for the construction of a group of homes for the veterans and their families. Property was obtained on Erie. St. North and construction took place in 1947.

A new type of entertainment came to the village when the Erie Theatre opened with Jack Dean as manager and Harland Rankin, the owner. Clinton Willan was the projectionist. In the coming years, the advent of television was to take precedent over the movie house and it's doors were closed.



Dr. A. Wilson's garage, a former livery barn, now the Community Hall.



No. 3 Highway looking east.

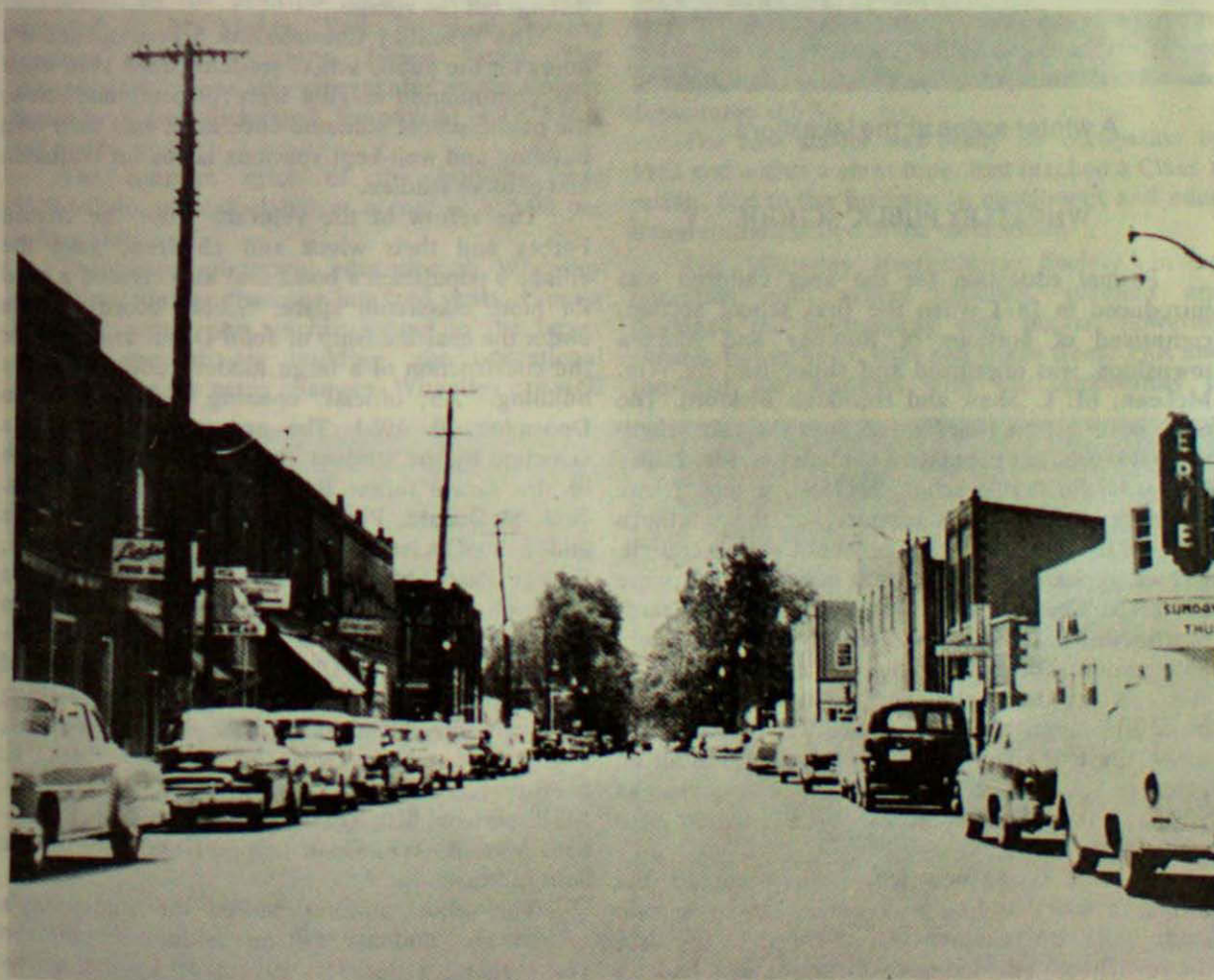
The fifties continued with a marked degree of progress in the development of the community. Extensive improvements on the facilities at the harbour gave cause for another huge celebration. A Water Festival, sponsored by the Wheatley Kinsmen, was attended by thousands of people. Highlight of the festivities was the crowning of the Water Festival Queen, Miss Victoria Beleutz. The winner of the pound net boat race was Reg Poole, operating H. Getty and Sons boat. The Everett H., piloted by

Norm MacCauley, won the gill net tug race and in the drawing match, Clive Srigley's team of horses out-pulled Frank Getty's boat. The filleting contest was won by Miss Barbara Foster.

Land development plans resulted in the creating of new subdivisions on the eastern boundaries of the village. Nelson Wood Products were operating to capacity, turning out fish boxes and pallets.

The year 1965 marked a century since the founding of Wheatley and for unknown reasons, there were no celebrations to honour the occasion. Perhaps the excuse was that the country was in the midst of planning it's own Centennial Celebrations and with all the many events taking place in the year 1967, there may not have been enough enthusiasm among the residents to plan a centennial celebration of their own.

In 1966 a happy event took place which was shared by all the Wheatley residents as well as many others. Miss Diane Coulter, a lovely blond, eighteen-year old girl from Wheatley, captured the Miss Dominion of Canada Crown at Niagara Falls on July 1st. The title also allowed her the opportunity to travel to England and compete in the Miss World



Erie St. looking south - 1952

Beauty Pageant. There she met a host of people including the Canadian-born Lord Thompson, of Fleet. Her reign as a beauty queen took her to many places of excitement and glamour but she chose to give it all up for a marriage career with Bill Manery.

The last fifteen years of history in Wheatley are included in the brief paragraphs and sketches covering the role of the citizen in the churches, school, recreation, service clubs and community services. These paragraphs can only describe briefly the many ways in which the village residents have helped to build a proud community.



A winter scene at the lakeshore.

WHEATLEY PUBLIC SCHOOL

Formal education for the area children was introduced in 1871 when the first school section, comprised of portions of Romney and Mersea townships, was organized and supervised by Wm. McLean, M. L. Shaw and Hezekiah Bickford. The one - room school was located near the lake where there was a larger population of students. Mr. James Neil was the first teacher. In 1884, a new frame structure was built on property at the southern limits of the village near the present Catholic church. Names appearing on the 1900 school report were Lamarsh, Chamberlain, Coulter, Liddle, Vizzard, Martin, Julien, Lounsbury, Tremblay, Healey, Fitch, Shaw, Smith, Gibson, Christie, White and Jones.

The growing population of the village soon made it evident that a larger building was needed. In 1902, a four-room two storey school was built on Lamarsh Street at a cost of \$5,000.00. Financing was arranged through debentures at 4% and the debt was paid off in 1922.

As soon as the new school was occupied, the former school building was moved about a mile south on Lake Street and became known as the Lake Shore School. The Lamarsh Street school had an enrolment of 149 in 1903.

W. C. Dainty, the first principal of the Wheatley Public School, served until 1909 when he was succeeded by the following principals throughout the years until today: J. E. Schlechter, J. Harvey, Miss Mabel Trudell, Miss Cowan, Miss Jean McLean, Miss Jessie Linblater, Miss Minnie Sherritt, P. E. Gillbank, W. J. Robertson, Miss Anne Cole, J. Earle Walker, Earl Rawlings, C. Heywood, J. E. Cunningham, Mrs. Minnie Robertson, Roy Marshall, Roland Plato, and Ben J. Taves.

On February 2, 1943, fire of unknown origin totally destroyed the four-room school and all its contents. Classes had been dismissed just a short time before the fire was discovered. In a report to the London Free Press, the principal, J. E. Cunningham, claimed to have been the first to see the fire which had enveloped the whole basement in flames. The Wheatley Volunteer Fire Brigade answered the call promptly but were unable to save the forty year old building.

The scarcity of building materials due to supplies being needed for the war effort, made it impossible for the school board to rebuild.

Once again the local residents rallied to a cause, by offering classroom space in various locations throughout the village.

The Wheatley Continuation School opened its doors for the public school students until 1946 when the Continuation classes were discontinued. Now, the public school students once more had their own building and well-kept spacious lawns for recreation and outdoor studies.

The return of the veterans from the Armed Forces and their wives and children, gave the village's population a boost and also created a need for more classroom space. School board officials under the chairmanship of John Dean, arranged for the construction of a large modern addition to the building. An official opening took place on December 10, 1954. The programme included a selection by the student choir, under the direction of Mrs. Grace Julien. Remarks were made by Mrs. F. J. McDonald, President of the Wheatley Home and School Association, Inspector A. A. Gilroy, George Parry, M.P.P. for West Kent and William Murdoch, M.P.P. Essex South. Rev. A. B. Irwin gave the Prayer of Dedication and Forest Shuttleworth presented the Queen's portrait on behalf of Branch 324, Royal Canadian Legion. The teaching staff was introduced as follows: Roy G. Marshall, Principal, teachers: Miss E. Kissner, Mrs. E. Merithew, Mrs. Mary Lynn, Mrs. M. Powell, Mrs. M. Robertson, Mrs. Gladys Scott, Miss G. J. Robertson, Mrs. A. Waterman (supply) and Mrs. Grace Julien, Music.

The school building served the community's elementary students for an additional eighteen years before a decision was made by the newly-formed County School Board, to construct a new

building. The firm of J. P. Thompson Associates of Windsor, designed the "open concept" architectural plan and construction was carried out by Ben Bruinsma and Sons Ltd. of Chatham. The facilities included twelve class areas, a special education area Science room, Art room, Gymnasium, Library Resource Centre, Theatre Arts Centre, Guidance room, Teachers' Preparation room, Health room, Change rooms and Administration offices. The "open concept" design was the first of it's kind in the Kent County School Board system.

On a warm day in June of 1972, the students, carrying their books and belongings, left their old familiar classrooms and walked across the street to their new school. Excitement was high as they marvelled at their new surroundings; air-conditioned, brightly decorated, carpeted classrooms without walls, and for the first time, a gymnasium of their own.

The official opening was held on November 17, 1972 with the auditorium filled to capacity. In attendance were local dignitaries, members of the architectural and construction firms, parents, students, friends and the teaching staff who were introduced by the principal Ben J. Taves. These included D. M. Stokes, Vice Principal, twenty teachers and a secretary, Janice Janke. The Wheatley school was ably represented on the County Board by Robert Richmond. Enrolment in 1972 was 464 pupils.

The contract price of the building was \$620,642.00 and calculated at a cost of \$18.90 per square foot.

The history of formal education in Wheatley dates back to more than one-hundred years. From a little one room, one teacher school to the large, spacious present day building, the educational system had made many changes. Wheatley can well

be proud of it's educational facilities and of the many students who have graduated and moved on to further their studies in other institutions.

The Homecoming celebrations being held in Wheatley in July of 1982 will be featuring a reunion of all former pupils of the Wheatley Continuation and Public schools. Once again, the halls of the sixty-year old building will ring with the sound of voices and laughter as countless numbers of men and women recall the memories of the "good old school days".

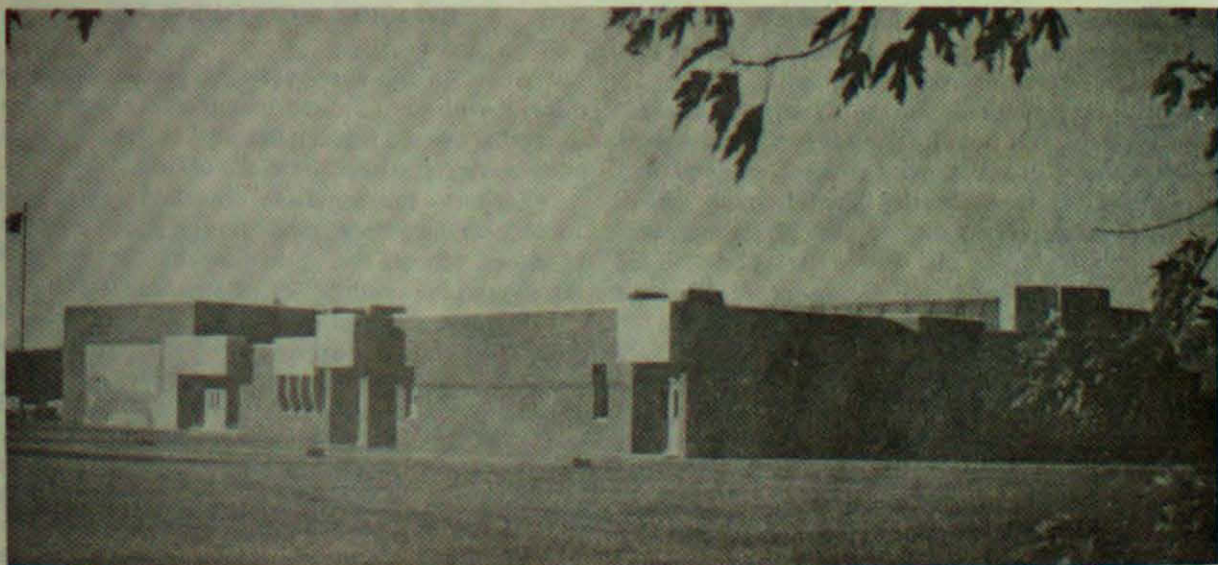
WHEATLEY CONTINUATION SCHOOL

On September 1, 1914, Wheatley's Continuation Classes opened with twenty-two students enrolled in Form I, seven in Form II and seven in Form III. The Misses Willoughby and Eaton were in charge. Classes were conducted in the Lamarsh Street public school and rented rooms within the village.

The extremely crowded conditions became unsatisfactory and steps were taken by the school board to provide better accommodations. In 1921, following the purchase of seven acres of property on Erie Street North, construction began on the new two-storey brick Wheatley Continuation School. The total cost was \$30,000, financed by 20 year debentures at 6%.

The new school was ready for occupation by 1922 and within a short time, had reached a Class A rating, due to the increase in enrollment and additional courses added to the curriculum.

The Wheatley Horticultural Society, in co-operation with school officials, planned and designed the landscaping with plants, flowering shrubs, flower beds, fruit and shade trees. This also provided the students with the opportunity to



Wheatley Area Public School, November 17, 1972.

observe the growing habits, proper fertilization, and pruning methods. A poultry house and stock was later added for the students of Agriculture.



Wheatley Continuation School teachers, Miss Lottie Hammond and Miss Edna Kennedy

The addition of two University of Western Ontario courses, Canadian Services and Municipal Government, enabled the Continuation School to maintain a high standard of education.

By the year 1946, the newly-formed Essex - Kent High School Board, the first combined county district board in the province, was contemplating the closure of the Wheatley Continuation School. Despite strong efforts on the part of the students and parents, the classes were discontinued in 1946 and the building became the Wheatley Public School.

The following were principals from 1921 to 1946: Miss Alice McCraig, Miss Grace Bennett, Thos. Presten, Miss Jennie McDowell, Major Francis Tanton, Leo F. Curtin, Fred S. Phillips and H. Richardson.

In 1952, construction began for the new 26 room Leamington District Secondary School, built at a cost of \$775,000.00. At the official sod - turning ceremony, the students were represented by Donald

Antol, 16, of Wheatley and Mary Wigfield of Leamington. The official opening was held on November 3, 1953 with student enrolment at 710 under the guidance of principal, James Hume.



W.C.S. students presenting a French Minuet.



W.C.S. teachers, left to right; Amelia Heatherington, Ada Robertson, Pat Alexander, Audrey Richards.

RELIGION AND CHURCHES

Although the early years of pioneer life were difficult with very limited means of transportation, the settlers would travel miles on foot, on horseback, or by carriage, to hear the Word of God.

Zealous missionaries travelled about the country on horseback, preaching services outdoors, in homes, schools and in the few churches scattered throughout the southwestern district of Ontario.

In 1826, the first organized circuit in the area was the Amherstburg - Blenheim circuit. The minister would take a month to complete his rounds, travelling by horseback over poorly-constructed, muddy roads and hazardous weather conditions.

Through preaching services and revival meetings, the faithful received the inspiration to erect their own places of worship in Wheatley.

The years have brought about many changes. Religious leaders now encourage their followers to

co-operate with those of other faiths by holding joint services of worship.

A number of years ago, a Ministerial Association was formed by the local clergy representing all the Wheatley churches. Annual Inter-Faith events, including weekly Lenten services and a World Day of Prayer, have led to better understanding among fellow Christians.

The following is a brief historical sketch of each of these churches.

THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA

The history of the United Church in Wheatley reaches back to the days of the "saddle-bag preachers" and Methodism. In 1866, a young Methodist preacher, Rev. George Clarke, conducted his first service at a meeting house west of Wheatley. The Romney circuit was his first charge but his duties also included appointments in Mersea and Raleigh townships.

The young evangelist travelled on horseback and later a "sulky" carriage. In a letter to a dear friend, Mrs. John Fisher of Wheatley, written in 1932 when he was ninety-three years of age, he described his experiences in those early days. Wild

turkeys and deer crossed his path many times as he journeyed along the Talbot Road. On one occasion, he shot a deer. Mr. Coke Renwick of Romney, cured the pelt for him and it served as a cushion in his sulky. Worshippers filled the meeting house near Wheatley each Sunday, inspired by his preaching.

In 1874, the property donated by Mr. H. Ivison on Victoria Avenue, became the site of the new Wesleyan Methodist Church. The Gothic style structure, thirty-five feet by fifty feet, and featuring a tall spire, was constructed of red brick, purchased at five dollars per thousand.

One year later, a Methodist Episcopal church was built on Talbot Street East at a cost of \$2,000.00. Records of this church were discovered in 1957 when the old tower was torn down by the present owners, the Baptist congregation. In the cornerstone, a manuscript, coins, newspapers and items of historical interest were found. It appears that a series of revival meetings, conducted by a junior preacher, Rev. G. Squire of the Leamington circuit, were responsible for the establishment of the new church.

Ten years later, in 1884, the two congregations became one under the guidance of Rev. R. A.



Victoria Ave. Old Methodist Church
Victoria Ave. Methodist Church. Extreme left

is the Wm. Martin house and garage. The small white building is the original Baptist Church.

Howey, with worship services held in the Victoria Ave. church.

The growing population and the increase in church membership during the next three decades resulted in overcrowded conditions and a need for larger and improved facilities. Property was obtained on Talbot Street West, the former site of the first Baptist church.

The dedication ceremony took place on March 7, 1915 with Rev. Irwin in charge. Church organizations held a variety of fund-raising projects to meet expenses. Chicken suppers, concerts, and bazaars were popular means of reducing the church debt and enhancing the social life of the village.



Victoria Ave. and the Wheatley Methodist Church - 1920.

In 1925 the Methodist church became the United Church of Canada, following the union of Presbyterian and Methodist churches.

In 1961, Mr. Hilton Hickson, the only surviving member of the 1914 trustee board and building committee, turned the sod for the construction of a large addition to the church, the Christian Education Centre. This centre has not only filled the church's needs but has been used on many occasions by other community groups and organizations.



The Methodist Church, now the Wheatley United.

The Wheatley United Church celebrated their centennial year in 1974 with an old-fashioned church parade and special services. A booklet, authored by Mrs. Peggy Sine, describes the history of the church and pays tribute to some of its worthy members. Among these names are a well-known resident, Mrs. Thelma "Teach" Stein, who devoted many years of her life directing the Rose Bud Class, and Grant Brown and his late wife Selena, who served as treasurers of the church for over forty years.

The present minister is Rev. Bert Johnson, a native of Newfoundland.

THE BAPTIST CHURCH

A 1918 publication on the history of the Baptist church in Wheatley, describes its founding preachers, Elder Williams, Elder Corlett and Elder Fitch as being fearless, forceful and faithful preachers of the gospel. During the mid-nineteenth century, services were held irregularly at various locations in the area. These included a Methodist meeting house west of the village, the bar-room of George Middleton's hotel, and a school classroom. Jacob Julien, a large property owner and hotel-keeper, donated a lot on the north side of Talbot Street West for the purpose of erecting a Baptist church.

In 1866, a small white-frame structure was completed, the first church building in Wheatley.

The first minister was Rev. E. D. Sherman. Preaching services were held at 10:30 a.m. and 7 p.m. each Sunday with Sabbath School at 2 p.m..

The original part of the present church was built in 1874 for the Episcopal Methodists. When the two local Methodist groups united in 1884, their worship services were held in the Victoria Ave. church and the Talbot St. E. building was sold to William McLean. For ten years it was used for a number of purposes, including the conducting of Salvation Army services.

The Baptists purchased the building in 1894 from McLean, for the sum of \$800.00, the transaction being \$400.00 in cash and the little church building on Talbot West. Before being occupied, the red brick building was repaired and renovated. A church member, Harvey Omstead, donated a large bell which was hung in the tower.

Extensive renovations were made in 1957, the tower torn down and replaced by a modern one. The old ivy-clad brick walls were cleaned, the original bell re-hung in the new tower and larger facilities added.

In 1981, the congregation celebrated their 100th anniversary with special services, Homecoming Week, a Fashion Show and a Family picnic. The present pastor is Rev. Robert Wilkins who arrived in 1981. The beautiful chimes which ring out their joyful sound, were donated by the Omstead family.

OUR LADY OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

Prior to the mid-1950's, people of the Roman Catholic faith had to travel to churches in Stevenson, Tilbury, or Leamington for services. A church census count during that time revealed that there were enough families to establish a church in Wheatley. Property was purchased from the Howard Moody's south of the village boundary in Romney Township.

Rev. Fr. Charles Lanoue offered the first mass in the Community Hall in 1955. Services were held there for almost one year until the church building was completed.

On November 18, 1956, the new church was dedicated by Most Rev. J. C. Cody, Roman Catholic Bishop of London. Adding pomp and ceremony to the event was an Honour Guard from the Tilbury Knights of Columbus in full regalia. Soloists were Henry Becigneul, Mrs. Shirley Omstead and Mrs. Pat Nicholson.

The influx of many Portuguese families immigrating to the area from Portugal and the Azores, added a large number of names to the parish list. This, along with many tourists to area campgrounds, created over-crowded conditions at the two

weekly Sunday services. For a number of years, visitors and summer residents attended outdoor mass at Camper's Cove. Rev. Charles McNabb conducted the services, assisted by his brother, Monsignor Albert McNabb, who also resided at the church's rectory.

In 1975, Father Stanley Nouvion, the present pastor, was installed by Bishop Sherlock of London. Two years ago, Rev. Sylvio Gasparotto took up his duties to serve the Portuguese of Essex County with Wheatley as his home.

The 25th anniversary celebration of the parish was held on November 15th, 1981 with a mass celebrated by Bishop Marcel Gervais, followed by a dinner at the Lebanese Club in Leamington.

CHRIST CHURCH — ANGLICAN

The first Anglican Church of England services in Wheatley, were held in 1896 due to the efforts of a local merchant, G. A. Eastman. These were conducted by Rev. F. M. Holmes of St. John's parish, Leamington Ont.. Each Sunday afternoon, he travelled to Wheatley by horse and carriage to



Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament Church built in 1956.

preach to the tiny congregation. Services were conducted in the Foresters Hall until 1903. Following the completion of Eastman's new brick building on the corner of Talbot and Lake St., the second floor was rented to the Masonic Order and here the Anglican church services were held for a number of years.

In 1918 the Anglicans purchased the vacant former Methodist church on Victoria Ave..

The difficult years of the Depression and a small congregation, were the main reasons for the cancellation of Anglican services in Wheatley in 1937. Members travelled to services in Leamington or Comber, or chose to attend the Wheatley United Church, and the church property was sold.

Whatever the reasons, the faith of the Anglican followers did not fade away as the small group strove to find means to build their own place of worship in the village.

In 1956, services were held in the Community Hall, sharing the facilities with the parishioners of the newly-formed Roman Catholic parish of Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament. Property was purchased on Victoria Ave. and construction was underway to build a modest frame structure. The former Angus McDonald home on Walker Ave. was obtained to be used as a parsonage and the first occupants were Rev. and Mrs. J. Mennell.

The present pastor is Rev. W. F. Ralph and the organist is Miss Lisa Franklin.

IMMANUEL BAPTIST CHURCH

Very little information could be obtained regarding the brief history of the Wheatley Immanuel Baptist Church, but it would be unfair to neglect to mention its existence.

A note in the Wheatley Journal issue of May 25, 1933, describes the ordination of the church's new pastor, Rev. Walter Lampiere. The ceremony was held as a joint meeting of the Western Conference and delegates from churches of the Union of Regular Baptists with Rev. Scott of Courtwright in charge.

The small white frame church was situated on Walker Ave.. When services were discontinued, it was sold and moved to Tilbury about 1949 to serve as a Pentecostal Church.

CHRISTIAN MISSIONARY ALLIANCE CHURCH

During the 1950's, the former Erie theatre building was used by the congregation of the Christian Missionary Alliance church. Services were conducted by Pastor Fredrick Brown for only a brief period of time.

EVANGEL TABERNACLE

In 1943, the Rev. J. E. May purchased the former Methodist church on Victoria Ave., for his

Evangel Tabernacle congregation. The building had been vacant for many years and was badly in need of repair. A number of restrictions had been placed on the sale agreement by the Methodist group who built the church in 1874, two of them being that the structure could only be used as a church or dwelling place and that no dancing could take place within. Rev. May and his wife renovated a portion of the building to be used as their residence until their home adjacent to the church was completed. Their former living quarters are now Sunday School classrooms. Rev. May passed away in January 1981 and since that time, his wife Rev. Gertrude May has very capably filled in, conducting the worship services and pastoral duties with devotion.

WHEATLEY'S DOCTORS

The early pioneers of the area were often without proper medical services and had to rely on home remedies for relief from sickness and pain. Doctors were scarce and generally located too far away to be of assistance. Epidemics of typhoid, whooping cough, diphtheria and scarlet fever claimed many lives due to lack of medical care. Immunization was unheard of and the dreaded black flies were blamed as germ carriers, resulting in serious illnesses and often fatalities, particularly among the children.

Dr. Horatio Mills -

About the middle of the nineteenth century, Dr. Horatio Mills, a native of Montrose, Scotland, came to Romney Township and located on Lot 11, Concession 4. A graduate of the University of Edinburgh, he had earlier spent three years as surgeon of a whaling fleet.

Also an experience teacher, he taught at various schools in Kent and Essex Counties. Besides his teaching assignments and medical practice, he farmed and cleared his 100 acres of land with the help of his sons.

In 1864, he opened a post office in his home and with the consent of postal authorities in Ottawa, had it named Old Montrose, in honour of his native home town. The office was closed in 1880.

Dr. Mills, the first doctor in the vicinity, continued to practice until his death. Many of his descendants still reside in Wheatley and area.

In 1869 two doctors are listed as practicing in Wheatley. Dr. George Overholt and Dr. Chamberlain were only here for a short time.

Dr. George Wright -

Dr. Wright, a native of Romney Township, was the son of Thomas and Anne (Cox) Wright, respected pioneers from Lincolnshire, England. He financed his education by teaching at various times. Graduating from Trinity Medical College, Toronto in

1890, he took further studies in England. Returning to Canada, he established his practice in Wheatley in 1897.

The practice was then taken over by Dr. T. A. McCormick, father of the noted Windsor cancer specialist Dr. N. McCormick.

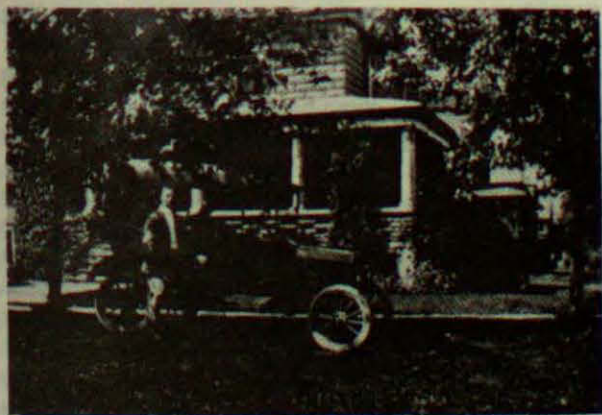
Dr. E. Shoemaker arrived in 1898, a recent graduate and double Gold Medalist from Trinity Medical College. The May 12, 1898 issue of the Wheatley Journal published his valedictory address in honour of his outstanding achievements. He only remained for a short period of time.

Dr. J. C. Lindsay came to the village in 1900 and practiced for several years.

Dr. G. C. Monroe's two years in Wheatley, from 1902 to 1904, were not very easy for him. Shortly after his arrival, he became stricken with the dreaded typhoid fever. Following his recovery, he was seated one evening on the balcony of the Commercial Hotel when a "baby" cyclone struck, causing damage to the building and shattering the doctor with pieces of flying glass, causing injuries.

Dr. Fredrick John Walker, a native of Petrolia, graduated from University of Toronto Medical School 1905, coming to Wheatley in the same year. Here he remained until his death in 1939. Known as a typical country doctor, he never married and lived quietly with his sister, Emma, in their home on the corner of Elm and Talbot Street, now the residence of Dr. and Mrs. E. M. McLean.

Dr. J. A. Campbell, a native of Blenheim, served in Wheatley until 1912, when ill health forced him to retire. He had the distinction of being one of the first owners of an automobile in the community.



Dr. Leader in front of his home with his first car.

Dr. Robert Walker Leader who took over Dr. Campbell's practice, remained in Wheatley for over forty years. A graduate of U. of T. Medical School in 1901, he located in Wheatley in 1912. In 1914 he was appointed coroner for the counties of Kent and Essex. Dr. Leader also operated a drug store at the rear of his premises on Erie Street North, and a telegraph office for the Canadian National Railway.

In 1946, after being in practice for 45 years, Dr. Leader, a leader in community affairs and the medical profession, retired to enjoy his remaining years with his wife Jeanette, a woman of great talent and fine qualities. On April 21, 1953, the beloved doctor passed away and a whole community mourned its loss.

Dr. Earl Metcalfe, a physician and surgeon, located on Lake Street North in 1934.

Dr. Milton C. Edsall arrived in Wheatley in 1937 following seven years of practice in Michigan and southwestern Ontario. A native of Leamington, he was attracted to Wheatley as a young lad because of his keen interest in a Wheatley baseball team which was well-known throughout the area. Young Milt would travel the route, sixteen miles return on his bicycle. At times, in order to get through the muddy, impassable sections on the unpaved Talbot Road, he would wrap pieces of rope around the tires to provide traction. This is only one small example of how a young man with ambition and dreams of being a medical doctor, always found a way or a solution to a problem.

The Depression era was a difficult time for everyone and this meant little pay for the general practitioner. The hours were long, hospital facilities were limited and every now and then epidemics of scarlet fever, mumps, measles, whooping cough and chicken pox, broke out among the population.

Dr. Edsall never left Wheatley, and by August of 1982, he will have spent forty-five years practicing in the village and area. As an active member of the Wheatley Lions Club, he has given his moral, and financial support to many needy causes. He has won the respect and the admiration of his colleagues for his long years of service, along with the gratitude of a whole community.

Dr. F. O. Topping, physician and surgeon, succeeded Dr. Walker in 1940. He remained until 1941 when Dr. McLean took over his practice.

Dr. Edwin Malcolm McLean, a native of Harrow graduated from Queen's University and interned at Metropolitan General in Windsor. He arrived in Wheatley in 1941 and soon became involved in the affairs of the community as well as looking after their medical needs. His success story was told very well in a publication written by Dave Derbyshire of Wheatley, in honour of the local doctor's achieve-

ments and presentation of the "Citizen of the Year" award from the village residents. Many honours and gifts were bestowed upon him in thanks and appreciation for his contributions to the recreational, spiritual and medical needs of the residents of Wheatley, and the surrounding townships of Kent and Essex Counties.

Dr. McLean retired in December 1981 after serving the area for over forty years. His practice was capably taken over by his partner, Dr. D. Eaton.

Dr. Richard Acton arrived in Wheatley in 1971 from a government medical post in Trinidad. He remained for a brief period, leaving to establish a practice in Blenheim.

Dr. J. Patrick Turner, a native of England, established his practice in Wheatley in 1972, with his son Robert as his medical assistant.

A former medical officer of the Royal Navy, his duties had taken him to points in the Far East and Australia. Upon retirement as a Commander, he immigrated to Canada, eventually locating in Alberta. The milder winters of southwestern Ontario prompted him to leave the cold, snow-bound climate of northern Alberta and fill an urgent need for another medical practitioner in Wheatley. His offices are in his residence on Highway No. 3, west of Wheatley.

Dr. David F. Eaton, a graduate of the University of Ottawa's Medical School, served his internship in Toronto, and filled several posts as a supply doctor in small towns near there before locating in Wheatley in 1975. Dr. McLean's busy practice required the services of an additional doctor and Dr. Eaton joined him in his offices on Erie Street North, where he remains today.

DENTISTS

Little is known of the early dentists who served the community in the past. The following are some of the men who had a dental practice in the village.

In 1907, Dr. Henry had offices in the Mills Block over the Merchants Bank. Dr. D. A. McGillvary operated a practice in the McVittie Block. Dr. S. M. Kennedy, Dr. Bradley and Dr. Sorenson also located in Wheatley at various times. Dr. Gregory Harvey is presently operating his dental practice on Talbot Street West in an office well equipped with the most modern facilities.

VETERINARIANS

In the annals of the history of Wheatley, the name "Doc" Wilson, invariably keeps surfacing. Dr. Arthur Wilson, a graduate in veterinary medi-

cine, arrived in the late 1890's and established a practice on Talbot West near his spacious brick home. There was plenty of work for him as horses were still in use for transportation and labour. Most farmers in the surrounding rural areas kept livestock which often required his services. A livery barn located nearby was purchased by him in 1923 to house his prized automobile. This building is now the Community Hall.

"Doc" Wilson, in spite of his busy practice, found time to be very much involved in the affairs of the community, serving as Reeve in 1926-27. Previously he had held the office of Warden of Kent County for the year 1923. His tragic death in a car accident in the 1940's, left a great void in the community.

Dr. John Warren D.V.M. located his veterinary practice in Wheatley, about 1950. His interests also included volunteer service in community work. He became involved in the local Boy Scout organization and the Legion Branch 324, acting as their historian. Ill health forced him to retire from his practice and he passed away in 1981.

Dr. L. S. McKibbin, a resident of Wheatley for thirty years, has become noted throughout the world for his care and treatment of animals, particularly horses. His practice, which began with the treating of livestock and household pets, gradually changed to the exclusive care of race horses, due in part, to his ownership of several winners on the tracks. His busy practice forced him to erect larger and better facilities on what was once the old Wheatley Fair Grounds, a short distance east of the village. Here, Wheatley Hall Farms, with its large equine pool and stables offers the most modern facilities available for the care and treatment of horses.

In recent years, Dr. McKibbin has travelled extensively all over the world, lecturing in leading universities and holding seminars dealing with his treatment methods using acupuncture and lasers. He is also the author of two books on equine health and care.

His success story has been written in leading publications in the United States and Canada. Million dollar race horses have visited the Wheatley stables, some having to be flown in from across the North American continent for treatment. Perhaps one of the most successful stories is well-known both locally and in the track world. Willy Tass, a race horse whose owner, believing him to be useless on the racing tracks, abandoned him in 1962 rather than pay a \$30.00 clinic bill. Through Dr. McKibbin's determination, care and training, Willy Tass rejoined the winner's circle, earning over \$36,000.00 during his career. Following the death of the fourteen-year old trotter, "Doc" erected a monument over the grave of Willy Tass, a short distance away from the stables where he was given all the love and care that he deserved. Willy did not

fail to return his master's favour.

The Wheatley Journal, in expressing appreciation over "Doc" McKibbin's story in the national Weekend magazine, commented, "It was only last summer (1979) that Doc was honoured as Wheatley's "Citizen of the Year". At that time we acknowledged that he was some kind of special person, and now the whole country will share our opinion."

Dr. C. F. Rhoads, a native of Woodslee and graduate of the Ontario Veterinary College, arrived in Wheatley in the 1950's to work with Dr. L. S. McKibbin as his assistant for a number of years. Later, he established his own practice which covers many areas of Essex and Kent Counties. Just as other local veterinarians before him, Dr. Rhoads has also given of his time to serve the community on fund-raising projects.

Wheatley's animal population has been blessed with the services of these veterinarians, and their own personal contributions for the benefit of the community, are deserving of recognition in these annals.

TRANSPORTATION

In the 1880's, the Lake Erie, Essex and Detroit River railway was constructed by Hiram Walker, the distillery king. Beginning in Walkerville, the line reached Wheatley in 1889. In 1891, the name was changed to Lake Erie and Detroit River railway and a station was constructed at Wheatley.

This new method of travel also increased trade and commerce for the community and the surrounding rural area. Grain, livestock, and fish could now be shipped with greater speed and efficiency. Local merchants could receive their store products in greater volume with less possible damage. Former methods involved the use of old steam vessels which carried the goods to lake and river ports. Storekeepers had to arrange for the transportation of the merchandise by team and wagon, from warehouses to their place of business.

The addition of passenger service to the new line eventually phased out another method of travel, the stage-coach. It was noted in the Journal that on June 30th, 1897, the Flying Squadron, a stage-coach conducted by Andrew Hartford, made it's final run through Wheatley. Another operator during that period was Marshall Loyst, who operated a convenient service from Wheatley to Blenheim. William Dean, also operated a stage route to Blenheim in 1901. At that time, automobiles were rare and, seeing one caused a great deal of excitement. An automobile belonging to the Empire Tobacco Co. paid a visit to the local machine shop for engine repairs. It was reported that if all the opinions offered by the onlookers as to the probable speed, motor power, etc., were jotted down, there would

be enough matter to fill every column of a paper twice the size of the Family Herald and the Weekly Star.

In 1903, the railway was purchased by the Pere Marquette, with G. H. Dean providing transportation services to and from the station.

Dr. Campbell and a Mr. Maxwell were reported to be the first car owners in Wheatley but by 1912, three more owners proudly drove new models, O. E. Taylor with a Metz, W. E. Dean, a Martin, and T. A. Stevens with an Overland.

In 1913, a motor bus, operated by the Windsor, Essex and Lake Shore Railway, was providing passenger service from Wheatley to Leamington.

The exciting era of the automobile led to the building of mechanized vehicles for the First World War, while in the air, man's dream of flying became a reality. On July 4, 1918, hundreds of spectators witnessed for the first time, an aeroplane flying over Wheatley.

The Pere Marquette station became a place of bustling activity as fishermen, with bountiful catches in their pound nets, used the line's shipping facilities to transport their product to points in Canada and the U.S..

In the 1920's, Horace Coulter, proprietor of a livery stable, was conducting transportation services between the Pere Marquette station and the village. This service was discontinued in later years as more and more residents purchased trucks and cars, while firms began using their own vehicles to transport products to market.

Among the agents who conducted the business affairs at the depot were agents A. Weise, T. J. Stokes, O. S. Cornell, Nelson Julien and Arthur Cowan. Passenger service was discontinued around 1939. Following the purchase of the line and property by the "Chessie" system, the station building was sold to William Danielson, who tore it down and salvaged the lumber. The large metal sign - WHEATLEY, which hung in front of the station since it's beginning, was donated to the Wheatley Heritage Society by Danielson, along with other historical records and items connected with the history of the Wheatley station.

Progress has changed the transportation scene in Wheatley. The days of waiting to meet the train are fondly remembered by the older residents of the community, whose livelihood depended on it's arrival and departure.

MAIL SERVICE

Prior to the establishment of the Wheatley post office in 1865, the area settlers received and dispatched their mail by a horse-drawn mail coach. Mail depots were located at McLean's Dock with Wm. McLean in charge, Joseph Boosey's store at the mouth of Yellow Creek, and Jacob Julien's hotel on the Talbot Road. These were not official post

offices, but merely a convenient service for the businessmen's customers.

In 1860, Solomon Wigle was awarded the first contract to carry the mail by coach from Blenheim to Amherstburg, on the Talbot Road. His two sons, Alfred and Lewis Wigle, assisted him. Lewis, later became a well-known figure on the Essex County political scene followed by a career as a member of parliament in the Provincial Legislature. In 1887, he won the Federal seat for Essex County as a Progressive Conservative.

As the tiny community of Pegtown grew, the residents became dissatisfied with the name of the hamlet and were anxious to have it renamed. William Buchanan, a son-in-law of one of the first settlers, Richard Wheatley, submitted an application to the Federal government in Ottawa to establish a post office and to have it named in honour of his late father-in-law. Permission was granted and on January 1, 1865, Buchanan became the first postmaster, the office being near the southwest corner of the County line and Talbot Road on Lot 218, (now the Vizzard block).

The location of the office varied, with each postmaster usually conducting the mail service from his place of business. In 1906, the site chosen was in the newly constructed I.O.O.F. Hall. Here it remained for thirty-six years, excluding a period of 10 months when the building was destroyed by a gas explosion and temporary quarters had to be arranged.

In 1943, the post office was moved to Talbot Street East, formerly Ross Robertson's grocery store.

In 1975, a new Federal building was erected on Talbot Street East. The modern brick edifice provided excellent service but, with the growing population, he need for expansion was soon evident.

On March 28, 1979, a large crowd gathered in the Wheatley Post Office, to celebrate the official opening of a newly renovated, enlarged building. Among the patrons and guests were 30 children from the Wheatley Public School who sang the National Anthem. Postmaster Larry Ross introduced the members of the staff and the rural mail carriers. He also commended Mr. Forest Featherstone, who had spent 23 years as a mail courier prior to 1946. Representatives of the District Post Office Department, municipal officials and members of the Ministerial Association, including Rev. W. S. Ralph of the Anglican Christ Church who gave the Invocation, and Rev. Father S. Nouvion, who pronounced the benediction, joined with the many spectators to witness the cutting of the ribbon.

Mr. Hugh McConville, Acting Postmaster at Leamington, served as Master of Ceremonies and had the pleasant duty of presenting postmaster Ross, with a beautiful scroll from the Federal Department, in recognition of more than 100 years

of service provided by the Wheatley branch.

The following is a list of the postmasters who have served since the very beginning. Information was provided by Mrs. Fennell Foster, Curator of the Windfall Tweedsmuir History.

Name of Postmaster	Period of Service
William Buchanan	1-1-1865 - Dec. 1868
John Thompson	1-1-1869 - 29-11-1870
George Middleton	1-10-1871 - 25 - 1 - 1875
John E. Johnson	25-2-1875 - 29-5-1876
Thomas M. Fox	1-10-1876 - Mar. 1881
James Moore	26-3-1885 - 12-9-1892
Wm. McLean	1-10-1892 - 18-12-1898
Edward Gibson	19-12-1898 - 2-4-1933
Kenneth Corbett Vizzard	7-4-1933 - 30-1-1936
Nelson William Hyatt	31-1-1936 - 30-9-1950
Bertha Mary Blanchard (acting)	24-10-1950 - 23-2-1951
Lawrence Alexander Ross	24-2-1951 - To date

The following Post Office Rules were found in the Wheatley Journal, dated August 13, 1896. Editor Kenyon frequently included such articles in his weekly to bring a smile or two to its readers.

1. If you ask for your mail and are told there is none say, there ought to be, then go home and send the rest of the family at different times throughout the day.

2. Don't bring your letters to the post office until the mail closes, then curse the post master for not opening the bag and putting your letters in.

3. When you want a stamp on your letter, tell the postmaster to put it on. If he doesn't do it, thrash him. In case you put it on yourself, hold it to your mouth long enough to remove the mucilage. It will then stick on only til it's dry.

4. If you have a box, stand and 'drum' on it until the postmaster hands you your mail. It makes him feel good, especially if he is waiting on some person.

5. Start for your mail when you see the stage coming over the hill. You will then have a good time waiting for it and can say "How slow that postmaster is!"

6. If you get tired waiting for the mail to be distributed, just reach through the wicket, take your mail out of the box, and notice the SMILE you will receive from those inside.

PUBLIC SERVICES

The Telephone

In March 1903, local residents were overjoyed to hear the news that the Bell Telephone Company planned to extend services from Leamington to Wheatley at a cost of \$300.00 for the line. By 1904 there were ten subscribers and by 1906 there were sixty-five. The company, wishing to gain more usage of their service, promised to provide twenty-four

hour service when Wheatley had a total of one hundred subscribers.

In 1912, the Bell Telephone Company installed equipment in their new office in the Chamberlain Block on the second floor. Mrs. Carrie Overholt recalled working there as a switchboard operator during the peak of commercial fishing in the 1918-20 era. Calls flooded the switchboard as buyers, mainly for the U.S. market, sought to obtain the tons of whitefish and herring caught by the local fishermen. She described how she would often have to stand at the switchboard all day long, constantly connecting the calls between the buyers and the sellers.

The Dial System, installed in the fifties, eliminated the need for the dedicated "Hello" girls in the local office. Operator-handled calls were served by the Leamington office.

Water

In the early days of settlement, water for domestic and industrial purposes was obtained through the use of bored wells. When the dry season of 1929 exhausted the village wells, municipal officials took steps to eliminate a growing problem; the scarcity of water. Tests to explore the possibility of artesian wells, failed when results revealed the impossibility of such a system. The waters of Lake

Erie, a mile south of the village, proved to be the answer. In 1939 a water system was built, consisting of an intake with a 12" main installed to the pumps in a building near the lake shore. An 8" main was connected to an elevated tank at the rear of the present Community Hall property.

In 1963, the former Derbyshire property, south of the village was purchased. A new tank was constructed with a holding capacity of 330,000 Imperial gallons with pressure increased by eight times. The 145 foot tower of modern design, looking like a giant cocktail glass, is an attractive landmark which the residents can view with pride.

Maple "Mape" Carless Nelson, a lifetime resident of Wheatley, has been credited with being the driving force behind the building of the water tower with it's up-to-date facilities. Mape, who also spent twenty-five years as a member of the Wheatley Public Utilities Commission, was honoured by the village as the Citizen of the Year in 1977 for his outstanding contributions to recreation, business and industry in the community.

Hydro

As a result of a village by-law passed in 1914, Marvin White was given a franchise to establish an electric lighting system. The White electric plant powered by a gasoline engine, replaced the old gaso-



Bell Telephone operators in 1954. Left to right Coleen Morris, Elaine Liebrock, Bernice Leslie, Supervisor, Shirley Imeson, Doreen

Chadwick, Joyce Imeson, Ora Moody, Karen Epplett, Beatrice Seili, Joyce Cobby.

line lights. Merchants were pleased with the new system which illuminated the shops during evening business hours. Customers were able to view the merchandise formerly hidden in the shadows of the dimly-lit stores.

Homes were brightened by the new system and coal oil lamps were now being set aside to be used only in case of power failure.

The system was in operation for nearly ten years until the increase in demand for power became too great for the White plant. In 1922, negotiations began between the village council and officials of the Ontario Hydro Electric Power Commission to supply electrical energy to the village.

A plant was constructed in the winter of 1923-24 at a cost of \$40,000.00. The Council arranged a settlement with Marvin White and passed a bylaw authorizing the issue of debentures. At that time, Wheatley had the distinction of having the longest length of wire from the generating station at Niagara Falls, of any municipality in Ontario, a distance of 279 miles. The system was contracted for 40 H.P. at \$95.00 per H.P. Total debenture issue was \$13,000.00.

A report in 1939 showed the system to be greatly improved, the power increased by more than three times the original amount and a reduction of \$1.00 from the \$2.00 minimum monthly bill.

The full debt was paid in 1943, and in typical Wheatley style, the occasion was marked with celebration in the form of a large banquet held in the United Church basement.

Today the service continues to provide the community with all that is necessary to keep business and industry as well as the streets and homes, supplied with electrical power.

The Library

The Wheatley library has been in existence for over seventy years. The first location is unknown but later, Dr. Leader provided facilities in his drug store as he was an avid reader and promoter of education. By the year 1918, a circulating library served the community and books could be left at Hillmer's jewelry store.

In the 1950's, Branch 324 of the Royal Canadian Legion, assumed sponsorship of the library and arranged suitable accommodations on the first floor of their building on Erie Street North. Following the closure of the Romney Public Library, a large number of books were donated to the Wheatley branch.

The change over to a new County system once more necessitated a move to more suitable quarters. The Harris building on Talbot East was chosen as the new site, with librarians Merle Richmond and Yonne Liddle, in charge. Larry Ross serves as Wheatley's representative on the Kent County Library Board, at present. Additional

books have been purchased and with the loan system almost any book desired can be obtained through their services as well as a large selection of films.

WHEATLEY VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT

The local fire department is equipped with all the latest fire-fighting devices available for a department of it's size. The same promptness, dedication, and service still exists, just as it did in the early pioneer days when volunteers fought the fires with hand buckets and horse-drawn wagons.

Perhaps the most destructive fire, in terms of loss of businesses, occurred in 1890. The following information is an eye-witness account which was found in historian, Neil Morrison's files.

"The village of Wheatley, situated in Mersea and Romney on the Essex and Kent County line, which runs between the two townships, was badly damaged by fire. Nearly all the business places on the Mersea side were destroyed but the hotel escaped with little damage. Early Sunday morning, about 12:30 a.m., flames were noticed bursting out of a barn on the north side of the street, belonging to the Thompson house, which is occupied by Beecher Coulson and by the Underwood livery stable. The building and frame was filled with hay. The inhabitants were soon gathered by the cries of fire! fire! but as there is not protection whatever and no means of fighting the fire except with buckets the flames could not be stopped in their onward course. The next place to fall victim was the store owned by Harry Scott and occupied by Mr. Lightfoot's hardware store; then to the adjoining building owned and occupied by Harry Scott as a general store. Next followed in rapid succession, McLean's butcher shop, then the post office and telegraph office, the Eastman's dry goods store in the building owned by Lewis Wgle. Westward from the starting point, the flames caught the barns of the Erie House and burned them. Both hotels, the Erie and the Thompson House had very narrow escapes but only by heroic efforts were they saved. So rapidly did the flames spread and so weak were the means of fighting the fire, that little could be done about it but watch the flames destroy the work of many years.

There was no loss of life, but many narrow escapes from falling buildings. Telegraph communications were stopped by the burning of the telegraph office. As soon as the debris has cooled enough, rebuilding will go on where the buildings were destroyed. The origin of the fire is unknown. A number of people were down from Leamington assisting. By the light of the fire, one could read a paper for miles away."

In 1901, the Commercial Hotel burned to the ground and was rebuilt shortly after. This building is now occupied by Gordons, a grocery chain.

A major fire took place in 1911 when Gibson's

Implement Shop, Hickson's Paint shop, Lounsbury's Butcher shop, and Chamberlain's shoe store was destroyed. In the Chamberlain building, the equipment of the Bell Telephone Company's office located on the first floor was also lost.

In 1930, a gas explosion destroyed the Fire Hall and the village records stored within. A major fire at the Omstead Fisheries in 1949 resulted in the loss of the plant, which was soon rebuilt. In 1975, the McVittie Block, several apartments, a vacant

bowling alley and a "dime" store were destroyed in an 'all-night' fire.

In July 1981, the Wheatley Fire Department was called to the Cameron Packaging Plant in Romney Township. The plant was destroyed in spite of the efforts of the Wheatley, Romney firemen and other area fire departments.

The Wheatley Fire Department's Rescue truck was donated by the Wheatley Lions Club. A resuscitator was donated by the Wheatley Kinsmen



The I.O.O.F. built in 1906 on the corner of Lake St. N. and Elm. Note the hitching rails.

Club and in 1981 a new life-saving device, the Jaws of Life, was added to their service equipment. "Jaws" was financed from the profits of the 1980 Great Lakes Fisheries Exhibition, hosted by Wheatley. Firemen attended training courses on the use of this prying unit which has been successfully put into service on several occasions.

Throughout the years, the volunteer Fire Brigade has been called to assist in fighting fires in nearby communities as well as Wheatley. The present fire chief is Robert Charleton, taking over his duties a number of years ago from Frank Getty who retired after many years of service.

THE GREAT BANK ROBBERY

A daring bank robbery at the Wheatley branch of the Royal Bank on September 10, 1943, made news headlines that reached across the country.

On the evening of September 9th, five armed men gained entry into the apartment of W. P. Forshee, the bank manager and held both he and his wife hostage throughout the night. The men had

earlier demanded that Mr. Forshee open the bank vault but when they learned that a second combination was necessary and that a time-lock device would not allow the door to be opened until the set time of 9 a.m., they chose to remain until morning.

During the long vigil, Mrs. Forshee was asked to make sandwiches and tea, which she did. It was



The Royal Bank with the Forshee apartment on the lower left.



The I.O.O.F. Hall explosion January 15, housed the post office. The "pigeon-hole" 1936. The extreme left portion of the building cabinet is lying in the debris.



Mr. W. Forshee, bank manager.

reported that the men left her \$5.00 for her hospitality, telling her "don't worry, it's honest money."

At 4:30 a.m., the Forshees were taken by their captors to the bank adjacent to the apartment building, and quickly tied up, while one of the men tore the telephone wires from the wall.

Yates White, the bank janitor, arrived for work at 7:30 a.m. and he too, was promptly tied up. The waiting continued and as each of the remaining staff members entered the bank, they were herded into a small closet, namely Miss Jean Tait Mrs. Kathleen McLean and Miss Elta McClellan.



Miss Jean Tait, teller and William Chute, Wheatley's police chief.

Jean Tait was in charge of the second combination so she, along with Mr. Forshee, was persuaded to open the vault door. Immediately, the bandits seized the money which totalled over \$34,000.00 in notes and coins, tied their victims thumbs and feet, forced them into the tiny closet again, and escaped by car. The men warned their hostages not to report the incident for half an hour.

After fifteen or twenty minutes, one of the victims managed to become free, and sounded the

alarm. Meanwhile, several eyewitnesses had suspicions about strange men and an unknown vehicle. The previous evening, when two young boys, Ken Julien and Duane Dibbley were asked by a man to directed him to the bank manager's residence, they pointed to the apartment nearby. Mrs. Harold Julien noting the car with suspicion, took down the license number.

Within forty-eight hours, the five suspects, Franklin Smith, Peter Devlin, Leo Dubroy, Allan Baldwin and Vernard Gates, were arrested in Windsor, with much of the credit going to Detective Chris Paget.



Mrs. Kathleen McLean and Miss Elta McClellan.

While the suspects were being transported to the Kent County Jail to await their trial, the two Ontario Provincial Police cruisers carrying them, were involved in an accident causing injuries to two of the officers and Allan Baldwin. Detective Paget reported that the prisoners behaved well under the circumstances and even rendered assistance to the injured.

The lengthy trial, which took place in the County Court House in Chatham, was conducted



Left to right; Roy Hopper, Helen Julien, Ken Julien and Duane Dibbley who spoke to the robbers prior to the hold-up.

by Judge Henry Grosch, with Crown Attorney Bell acting for the prosecution and Major James Clark, of Windsor, for the defence. During the trial period, two of the prisoners, Baldwin and Smith, had to be removed to the Don Jail in Toronto, following an attempt by a person caught in the act of trying to assist them, to gain their freedom by escaping from the county jail.

A portion of the bank loot was found in an old tin boiler, lying in the weeds on the Sixth Concession Road, Tilbury East, and another large amount was found in Smith's room upon his arrest.

On December 21, 1943, the five men were sentenced to a total of fifty-one years in the penitentiary. Allan Baldwin, considered the ring leader, received fifteen years in addition to a four year term for a previous conviction. Peter Devlin, called "the brains" of the gang, thirteen years, Vernard Gates, nine years, Leo Dubroy and Franklin Smith, both seven years. The verdict followed one of the longest trials in the criminal history of Kent County.

WHEATLEY HARBOUR



Wheatley Harbour in the 1950's.

Prior to 1912, only privately owned wooden docks were located at Wheatley's port. These were built by the commercial fishermen for their own use. The year 1912 marked the construction of the new Government Pier, which enabled larger vessels to use its dockage facilities. One of the first such vessels to arrive was the "City of Dresden", a well-known passenger and cargo boat.

During severe storms in 1914, the pier received extensive damage in the amount of \$4500.00.

Although some of the fishermen continued to use their own docks, the Government pier became the main shipping and receiving point.

As the commercial fishing industry developed and expanded, the docking facilities soon became inadequate. An appeal by the fishermen was heard in Ottawa with the result that work soon began on the dredging of Muddy Creek and eventually a new harbour and breakwall was com-

pleted in 1951. The old Government dock was left to the mercy of Lake Erie storms and in time all that remained were a few wooden spiles which provided resting places for the herring gulls.



The Great Lakes Fisheries Exhibition, Wheatley Harbour 1981.



Chief Shingwauk, a cruise ship at Sault Ste. Marie, built by Hike's Metal Products.

Further expansion became necessary in later years as the commercial fishermen purchased larger

boats to meet the needs of a growing industry.

During the Great Lakes Fishing Exhibition, hosted by the port of Wheatley in 1980, a colourful ceremony marked the official opening and dedication of an enlarged, improved harbour. Mr. Romeo LeBlanc, Federal Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, in the presence of local fishermen, government officials and a large number of spectators, cut the ribbon. A bronze plaque was mounted to mark the occasion.



The fishing tug Liddle Bros., built by Jack and Jerry Liddle.

The harbour today is bustling with activity as workers in the food processing plants, the fisheries and the boat-building yards, strive to keep Wheatley known as the "Fresh Water fish Capitol of the World".

THE ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION BRANCH 324

The local branch of the Royal Canadian Legion was chartered on January 7, 1943 with John R. Dean as it's first president. The members met in the village council chambers; now the Lemon Tree shop. Following the return of many war veterans and the increasing membership, it was necessary to find larger accommodations. A building was purchased from Dr. R. Leader who had retired from his medical practice and drug store business. The two-storey structure was refurbished to include club rooms, a dance hall and kitchen.

The Legion Branch has fulfilled it's obligations on many occasions. Members and their families have been assisted in times of need. Community projects and special events have always had the full support of the Legionaires. Their current president is Russ Corlett.



Legion Br. 324 honours it's W.W. 1 veterans Paul Foster, Wm. Milne, Wm. McVittie, Grant Brown and Harry Walker.



The Wheatley Legion Br. 324 Pipe Band.



Legion members march to Cenotaph for Armistice Day services.

Each year at the Armistice Day services, in front of the local Cenotaph, when the community gathers to honour the fallen and the veterans, the Legion Colour Party and Pipe Band leads the parade, adding colour, dignity and an impressive military air to a solemn occasion.

The Legion Ladies' Auxiliary was chartered on January 28, 1952, due to the efforts of John R. Dean. The charter executive members were Pres. Doris Cresswell, Vice Pres. Fran McClellan, Secretary Melba Poole, Treasurer Grace Haikala. The organization has been very active throughout the years, working on fund-raising projects for the Legion and the community. The president for 1982 is Muriel Trefry.

THE WHEATLEY KINSMEN CLUB

The Wheatley Kinsmen Club has been active in the community since it's formation in 1946. Their motto "Serving the Community's Greatest Needs" has been demonstrated many times throughout the past thirty-six years.

One of the founding fathers was Charter President Duane Omstead, who recruited the young men of the community, many of them returned veterans, to join this all-Canadian association.

The Kinsmen's first major undertaking was a campaign to raise money to assist the Community Club in paying off a \$6,000.00 mortgage on the Community Hall. Several Minstrel shows, a history booklet and several other projects raised the necessary amount. Since that time, the club has held the responsibility of repairs, maintenance and rentals, but the ownership is still with the Community Club of which each Kinsmen is a member.



The Kinsmen Bus - 1959

For the past twenty years, the Wheatley Kinsmen have owned and operated a bus to transport public school pupils, senior citizens, the band, baseball and hockey teams, church groups and visitors who wish to tour the area.

Major projects have included extensive renovations to the Hall, and the purchase of ice cleaning equipment for the local arena. The club has built a fine reputation for it's annual fish suppers which have drawn large crowds.

Dave Campbell, a teacher at the Jack Miner Public School, is the 1982 president, with Ron Freeland acting as vice president.

THE WHEATLEY KINETTE CLUB

The Kinette Club was organized in 1957 with Shirley Omstead as Charter President. Dedicated to helping the Kinsmen to serve the community, has been their aim, and twenty-five years later, a small group of Kinettes are still carrying on this tradition successfully. Their fund-raising projects have included dances, car washes, bazaars, bake sales, raffles and catering. Service work has included driving seniors to the Friendship Club, assisting them on shopping trips and giving aid to Kin projects. The Kinette president for 1982 is Helen Symons.

THE WHEATLEY LIONS CLUB

As early as the year 1940, plans to organize a Lions Club in the village, were discussed with representatives from the Kingsville and Windsor Clubs. It was not until 1949 that the club was chartered with Gervais Lounsbury as the first president and F. J. McDonald as vice president. In spite of the service work being carried out by the Legion and Kinsmen, there was room for more and the new Lions members also became involved in raising funds for their special projects.

The Lions Club Carnival was an event welcomed by everyone. The annual Band Tattoo found the members working at booths and assisting in many other areas. Bingos, penny banks, and dances, are listed among the fund-raising projects designed to provide financial assistance to the disabled, and the handicapped residents of the area. Many youngsters throughout the past have received medical aids through the generosity of the Wheatley Lions.

Although the wives of the Lions do not have a chartered organization, they provide assistance on fund-raising projects. Several Lions members have attended the International Lions Convention held in different countries throughout the world, each year in June. Accompanied by their wives, these men have helped to spread good will to other nations in the name of Lions, a name that stands for service to all.

The 1982 president of the club is Don Dierckens.

THE WHEATLEY JAYCEES

The Wheatley Jaycees received their charter on October 26, 1960. The aim of the association is to train young men for leadership. Many have demonstrated these qualities in service work, in business and in industry. The group was organized for several months under the chairmanship of Keith Kennedy before the charter president, Larry McDonald, assumed his duties.



Neil Bailey being interviewed by telephone.

As was typical of other local service clubs, the young men were soon busily engaged in fund-raising activities. Service work included the decorating of the huge Christmas tree each year in the village square. During the summer they hosted the Saturday Night Concerts, held bicycle rodeos and a soap-box derby. A special feature of one of their promotion projects was the Flag-Pole sitter event which took place in 1961. A Wheatley resident, Neil Bailey, climbed up to his 40 foot perch on July 1, 1961 and remained there until August 12th, when it was learned that through the publicity received, a new industry, Clinton Products was going to locate in Wheatley. This project received national attention and several awards.

The "Get Out and Vote" campaign is another project of the local Jaycees who encourage voters to exercise their right and offer transportation as well.

The recently - elected president is Mike Sallmen of Wheatley.

THE JAYCETTES

Shortly after the Jaycees were chartered, their wives began planning their own organization under the direction of Helen Featherstone, chairperson.

Sandra McDonald became the charter president in 1961. Service to the community has included the supervision of area playgrounds, hosting the Beauty Queen contests, catering, and assisting the Jaycees in many worthy projects. The president for the 1982 year is Wanda Derbyshire.

WHEATLEY AND DISTRICT FRIENDSHIP CLUB



The Friendship Club has been the scene of many social functions since it's founding. One enjoyable event was hosting a group of ladies from Sweden and treating them to a Canadian luncheon. Club member Irene Buchan second from right enjoyed getting acquainted with visitors on her right and left.



Perry Liebrock, a founding member of the Club, with a new street sign on the property. Tom Willett looks on.

In February of 1970, a group of representatives from all the churches in Wheatley, met to plan and organize a club for the senior residents. Under the leadership of Loyal Huffman, the organization to be known as the Wheatley and District Friendship

Club was formed. Meetings were held in the Christian Education Centre, Wheatley United Church, and in a very short time, fund-raising projects were underway.

As the membership grew, the need for larger, more permanent facilities became apparent. The opportunity to purchase the vacant former public school, appealed to the membership, and the reasonable sale price offered by the owner of the building, Gerry Loughheed, of Sudbury, was accepted.



Wheatley and District Friendship Club president, Tom Willett "burning the mortgage" with Mary Lynn and Larry McDonald, Deputy-Reeve of Wheatley.

Three years after the purchase of the building, the \$60,000 debt was paid and a dinner banquet marked the celebration. The Federal programme for seniors, New Horizons, enabled the club to purchase furniture, recreational equipment, and kitchen supplies. Grants through the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services, the village councils of Wheatley, Romney and Mersea, have assisted in the operation of the Senior's Centre.

In spite of the assistance from all levels of government, the largest portion of the financing comes from the members through their donations, membership dues, recreational fees, art and craft sales and office rental from the village council. Operational costs are kept to a minimum due to the fact that maintenance repairs, daily cleaning, etc. are carried out on a voluntary basis by the membership which numbers over two-hundred.

The president is Velma Wharram who also heads the Board of Directors, assisted by Vice-president Margaret Hogg.

ORGANIZED SPORTS

Since the turn of the century, organized sports played an active role in the recreational life of the

community. In 1901, a football team was developing a fine reputation for their playing abilities. A newly-formed Junior hockey team kept the sports fans' enthusiasm alive during the winter months as they carried out some exciting matches on the frozen waters of Two Creeks, east of the village.

There were also sailboat races on ice, conducted by the fishermen in their flat-bottom vessels along Lake Erie's shoreline.

The young ladies of the village, not to be outdone by the men, formed a basketball club in 1907 and later organized a tennis club.



Wheatley Girls Athletic Club - 1918

Baseball soon became, without a doubt, the most celebrated sport in Wheatley. Games were held on empty lots within the village and on the public and high school grounds. Sponsors were churches, business and social groups.

In 1947, under the chairmanship of Frank Bailey, an Athletic Club was formed. The group's first task was to develop a ball park and install flood lights for night games. The grounds of the school property on Erie North became the site for the ball diamond. Nine teams and supporters held raffles, bake sales and car washes, to pay off the \$450.00 debt.

The Wheatley Kinsmen assumed responsibility for the financial support of the ball club and for several years, operated a food concession booth to assist the teams in purchasing equipment.

In 1951, the new Wheatley Athletic Association chaired by Bill Trussetter, was organized. The ball program, which had a registration of 150 youngsters, was becoming too large a burden for one service club and changes had to be made regarding the financial operations. Support came from all the

service clubs as well as the municipal councils of Wheatley, Romney and Mersea.

Wheatley teams now enrolled in the Ontario Baseball Association tournaments were soon bringing home trophies from small towns and villages throughout Ontario.

A special tribute was paid to Bill Trussetter in 1956 when, following an exhibition game between the Cleveland Indians College team and the Wheatley All-stars, he received the title "Mr. Baseball". Bill had led three local teams to O.B.A. championships, the 1948 Bantams, 1953 Juniors and the 1956 Juniors.

In 1960, the youngest organized players, the Wheatley Squirts, won the Class B tournament trophy in Chatham. This victory led to the team starring in a world premier production - "Creed In

Action" filmed by Movietone of California.

With all the attention being focussed on the young lads of the community, the teenage girls were also feeling the need for active participation, rather than just spectators. The local Legion agreed to provide sponsorship for a girl's team, with Larry Ross and Russ Corlett as coaches.

It would be impossible to name all those responsible for the success of baseball in Wheatley. A publication distributed several years ago, authored by Mark Omstead and Dave Derbyshire, outlines the history of the game and the people who made it possible. Throughout the pages can be found the names of dedicated players, coaches and loyal supporters, who from the years 1948 to 1979, brought home to Wheatley, thirty-four O.B.A. Championships.



Wheatley Girls Ball Team W.C.S. Smith, Marion Crewe, Minnie Beattie. Fourth Front Row: Ivan Coulter and Gerry Craven, coaches. Second row: Evelyn Reid and Edna Houston. Third row: Marjorie Paine, Grace

HOCKEY

In the early years of the history of hockey in Wheatley, the need for matching uniforms and protective gear was not important. A portion of last year's Eaton's catalogue was sufficient to cover the player's knees; held on by a few rubber jar rings from mother's pantry. Hand-knitted woollen socks, sweaters and toques offered the necessary warmth and protection from the cold winds blowing across Two Creeks, the Junior Hockey team's outdoor arena. An annual oyster supper was held in Gibson's Hall to raise funds for necessary expenses.

In later years, "Minnie Pond" located at the eastern limits of the village, became a popular outdoor rink. The site had once yielded tons of clay for brick-manufacturing and now served as a convenient place for skaters of all ages to enjoy. The local Kinsmen erected a small building on the site to be used as a shelter and change booth and with the assistance of the local firemen, flooded the rink whenever

Mother Nature failed to do so.

It soon became apparent that with the growing interest in hockey, the "Minnie Pond" rink could not accommodate all the skaters. Parents and youngsters began building rinks in their own back yard with the use of plastic sheeting. Snow was banked around the edges and the area flooded with a garden hose to create a smooth ice surface, weather permitting.

The enrolment of Wheatley youngsters in the minor hockey programme at the Leamington arena, offered more opportunities for participation. The Kinsmen Club purchased a bus to be used for transporting players to and from the arena during the season and also for the use of the community in other sports related events.

The Leamington programme for youngsters developed to the point where ice time could only be available in the early hours of the morning or later in the evening. This was a great inconvenience for the young players.



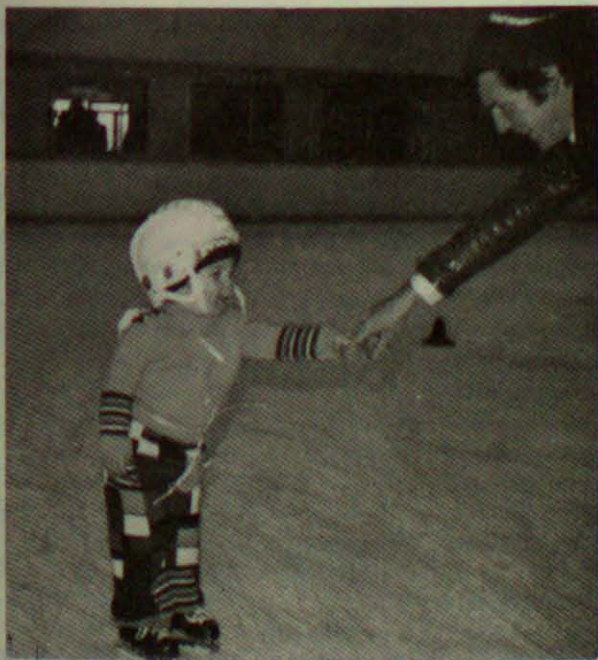
Wheatley's Baseball Team - 1927. Back row: Frank "Forty" McClellan, "Em" Malott, Bill Hill, Joe Kennedy, Glen "Buck" McLean and Ernie Fox. Front row: Frank Thompson,

Eadie Watson, Ivor "Spider" Kennedy, Major Tanton, principal W.C.S. Aryst "Wapp" Mills, Clair Ulch and Joe Dales.

In November of 1972, a local arena building committee was formed with J. T. Baker as chairman. Canvassers visited each household in the village and the surrounding townships of Romney and Mersea to receive pledges and donations for the construction of a new arena.

The site chosen was on the thirty-five acre recreation complex owned by the village and located near the public school. The design, by architect William Hilliker, was accepted and construction began, supervised by William Barnier, the contractor.

On July 26, 1974, the official opening ceremonies took place with a large crowd in attendance. The festivities began with a banquet served by the Legion Ladies' Auxiliary. This was followed by a gigantic parade headed by local municipal officials, members of parliament, one of Wheatley's native sons, Brad Selwood of the New England Whalers, and N.H.L. referee Art Skov, a former area resident. The symbolic cornerstone was laid by the building committee chairman, Robert Omstead. Bill Ruiter was introduced as the new director of the arena and recreation. A dance with music by the popular Lancaster Band, and an ecumenical church service on Sunday morning, brought the celebrations to a close.



Jeffery Ruiter, youngest participant in the Skate-a-thon, with his father, arena director Bill Ruiter.

The arena has served the area residents well with opportunities for skaters of all ages to use its facilities. Throughout the past eight years, many teams in the various divisions have brought home trophies from competition matches throughout

Ontario.

A figure skating club presents an ice carnival each year to a capacity crowd, and some of its members have given outstanding performances in competitions held in the province.



Mape Nelson "1977 Citizen of the Year" greeting his team at the arena.



Ivan Coulter with his plaques at the presentation ceremony in the arena on "Ivan Coulter Day" - Aug. 16, 1975.

The present director is Steve Price, assisted by Dan Wood, who very capably manage all the recreational activities, a vital part of the community's life.

HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY

In 1917, the Wheatley Horticultural Society was formed with a membership of 72 men and women. The fee of one dollar entitled the member to vote on business matters as well as receiving a number of bulbs. A grant from the Provincial government enabled the Society to purchase shrubs,

trees and flowers, which were planted throughout the village. The Memorial Plot, the churches and other public buildings were beautified with all the work and costs borne by the Society.

Elm trees were planted for a distance of five and one-half miles along Highway No. 3. Two hundred and seventy-five shade trees were planted on both sides of the road from the railway station to the lake and along village streets. Vacant lots were cleaned and flowers planted everywhere.

Because of the exceptional work done by the organization, a Certificate of Merit was presented to them by the Ontario Horticultural Association. Fred Collins, 1st vice president of the O.H.A. said, "It is my desire to pay tribute to the Wheatley Horticultural Society for the excellent work it has done. Of the over 300 branches of this Association, the town of Wheatley holds a place that should bring a feeling of pride to the breast of each Old Boy and Girl. This little town has established a record for the enduring work it has accomplished in the planting of trees on the highway, the beautification of its school grounds and the general improvement in the appearance of the whole village. If all would do what the Wheatley Society has done, what a transformation there would be in this Canada of ours."

One of the most active members was Mrs. Jeanette Leader, whose love of flowers was so beautifully displayed in her gardens. Others were inspired by her poetry and her lectures on the growing and caring of roses, her favourite flowers.

Today, although the organization no longer exists, many trees and shrubs which were planted by the Society members, still continue to beautify and shade the village streets and public grounds.

THE COMMUNITY CLUB



Community Club Park, Wheatley Ont.

The Wheatley Community Club has been referred to as a legacy of the 1932 Old Boys' Reunion. Following the reunion, it was the wish of a large number of citizens, to organize a concert and marching band for Wheatley. Within a short period

of time, band musicians were being heard in outdoor performances and local social events in the community.

Following the organization of the Wheatley Band, there was a desperate need for funds to purchase uniforms and to build a grandstand. These were the hard times of the Great Depression with a high rate of unemployment, and very little extra funds in the village's treasury for items such as these. John R. Dean, one of Wheatley's most public-spirited citizens, became president of the Wheatley Community Club, which he helped to organize. Assisting him as vice president were Druggist A. C. Wilson and E. A. Naylor as secretary - treasurer. The main purpose of the club was to provide entertainment for the betterment of the community, and to raise funds for the band's expenses.

Band concerts, which were held on the flat bed of a truck, were soon conducted from a newly erected bandstand, about 1936. Saturday evening outdoor concerts, with local talent, guest speakers on political affairs, world problems, religious issues, and beauty queen contests, were among the many programmes offered. Thousands flocked to Wheatley on Saturday evenings throughout the summer to be entertained by a variety of amateur and professional talent.

Following the end of World War II, a plan was outlined to build a community centre as a memorial to Wheatley's fallen heroes. When the building and property of Dr. Wilson was offered for sale, the Community Club decided to purchase and remodel the former livery stable. With the assistance of the newly-formed Kinsmen Club and many other public-minded citizens, the debt was paid off. Later, the maintenance and supervision of the Hall was undertaken by the Kinsmen Club, whose members are also declared as Community Club members.

THE WHEATLEY BAND

Around the turn of the century, Wheatley had its own Brass Band. Under the direction of Bandmaster A. Shippey, the members performed at concerts and other special events in the vicinity. A local tailor, A. Leadbeater, was commissioned to make their uniforms. An old map of Wheatley shows a bandstand situated where the Wheatley Journal building is today. In later years, the band appears to have folded for reasons unknown.

The lack of a local band for the 1932 Old Boys' Reunion, prompted some civic-minded citizens to organize a committee to raise funds for the purpose of forming a band for the enjoyment of the community. Bandmaster W. A. Drake, who had received training in the Imperial Army was chosen to act as

director.

The band's first public outdoor concert was at the Zion Sunday School picnic in 1933. Within several years, under the direction of Ivan Coulter, the band was bringing home trophies from competitions in Michigan and southwestern Ontario. In 1941, they placed second in competition at the Canadian National Exhibition in Toronto.

Their participation in all local parades and special events as well as Band Tattoos in other towns, earned them a fine reputation and brought honour to the community. Their leader Ivan Coulter, spent his lifetime, devoted to instructing and directing music for hundreds of boys, girls and adults.

In 1965, the band ceased to be organized and the old instruments were turned over to the Wheatley Public School. The school was fortunate in having a music teacher arrive in later years who saw the need for making use of the band instruments. Mrs. Diana McAuslan, aroused the enthusiasm of her music pupils and the interest of others. Under the direction of Mr. Jack Jones, the band instruments were once more being played on the streets of Wheatley. Bandmaster Kevin Mogyorod



Ivan Coulter in front of his home.



The Wheatley Band in the late thirties.

became the new director in 1976. New uniforms and flags for the colour guard were purchased with funds from various projects.

Invitations were accepted to perform for special events and parades in towns and villages in Kent and Essex counties, their smart white and blue uniforms presenting a colourful scene as they marched on parade.

Like so many other organizations, the continued operation of the band required a great deal of volunteer work. Transportation, fund-raising projects, and telephoning took countless hours with the result that once more, the band was forced to put away its uniforms and instruments until another time when interested citizens may once again revive an old tradition.



Ivan Coulter with Miss Romney, Pam Coulter, Miss Wheatley, Michelle Nicholson and Miss Mersea, Shelley Edwards.



The Wheatley Marching Band

BOY SCOUTS AND GIRL GUIDES

The Scout movement was first introduced in Wheatley in 1913 when a Boy Scout troop was formed with J. I. Harvey as Scoutmaster. Since that time hundreds of boys have received the benefits that are derived from the experience of being a Wolf Cub, Boy Scout, Rover, Venturer or Sea Cadet.

Dedicated leaders spent a good deal of volunteer time and effort to give the boys the opportunity to attend summer camp, to learn the tricks of rope tying, to follow the Scout law and to practice sportsmanship.

In 1964, a campaign to raise funds for a Scout Hall began. Under the chairmanship of Dr. Robert Ferguson and Finance chairman L. R. Omstead, sufficient funds were raised and a cement-block building was erect on property purchased from Dr. J. Warren.



Turning the sod for the new Scout Hall. Left to right, Dr. Robert Ferguson, Legion Pres. Larry Ross and Dr. Warren, D.V.M.

The dedication ceremonies took place on June 3, 1965 with Rev. C. Smith giving the Invocation. Branch 324 Royal Canadian Legion, presented a new Scout flag to Scout Doug Coulter, while Scout Bill Charlton raised the national flag.

Although membership has declined in recent years, the spirit of Scouting still exists as a few dedicated leaders and assistants strive to maintain that spirit.

The Girl Guides organization has also left its mark in the community under the leadership and training of willing volunteers. It would be difficult to name all the women responsible for the success of the Guide movement in Wheatley but every little Brownie and every young Girl Guide cannot help but

feel enriched by the experience of being members. The guidance and knowledge which they received while under the supervision of their leaders will not be forgotten.

THE TALBOT TRAIL GOLF COURSE

In 1963, a group of fourteen golf enthusiasts established the Wheatley Rolling Acres Golf Course, situated on seventy-five acres of property, east of Wheatley, bounded on the north by No. 3 highway and on the west by the Klondike Road.

With determination and enthusiasm, the group conducted membership drives and work projects resulting in beautiful, well-landscaped greens.

The property had historical significance, according to Jack Stein, a well-known local golfer and one of the prime movers of this enterprise. It was learned that the course was the only one located on the Old Talbot Road.

In 1981 at a dedication ceremony, the golf course received it's new title, The Talbot Trail Golf Course.

THE WHEATLEY AREA HERITAGE SOCIETY

In February 1980, a small group of citizens, organized the Wheatley Area Heritage Society. It's main purpose was to work to preserve the community's history and to give assistance to those seeking genealogical information.

Files were begun on the history of Wheatley along with biographies of some of the senior residents. Work projects have included transcribing grave stones in the Fairview and Erie Cemeteries, sponsored by the Essex and Kent County Genealogical Societies.

The founding president was Marion Stein. Arlie Metcalfe now heads the organization.

THE VILLAGE COUNCIL

The Wheatley Council chambers have been situated in various places throughout the years, as the village has never had a building of it's own for this purpose. In the 1920's the records were stored in the old fire hall which was later demolished in a gas explosion. All the records were lost in the resulting fire in which two men, Glen Tuffin and Jack Dean received serious injuries. Council meetings were conducted in the I.O.O.F. Hall until 1936 when the building was also destroyed in a gas explosion. Luckily, this time the village records and files were in a vault and were saved. The council chambers were then moved to the Vizzard Block until the late forties when a room was furnished for the public utilities and council chambers. J. Cecil Loughheed, the clerk - treasurer, conducted the daily affairs of the village from his insurance office.

Following "Cec's" retirement from the office of clerk - treasurer, the municipal office was located



Members of the Wheatley Area Heritage transcribing grave stones at the Erie Cemetery. \

in the Friendship Club building.

The Reeve Larry McDonald heads the following council: Deputy - reeve Allan Ascott, Clerk - Treasurer Tim Jackson, Councillors Mary Lynn, Jack Wigfield, Robert Smith, Secretary Julia Hyatt, Hydro Commissioner Douglas Dunmore, Water Commissioner Alfred Whaley, Public Works Superintendent James Cobby.

THE SOCIAL LIFE

Social affairs such as church and school picnics, concerts, oyster suppers, outdoor concert bands, box-socials, and "oldie" films in Potts Hall, were an important part of community life. The modest fees charged for admission were set to accommodate everyone. Perhaps these functions were the foundation for the building of a community spirit for which Wheatley is noted for.

In 1914, the village had it's own Social Club and on February 18th, 1915, the social event of the year took place with Shook's Orchestra of Detroit, providing the music. Descriptions of the gowns worn by the young ladies, presented a colourful scene of fashions of the latest material and design. Mrs. A. M. Wilson wore midnight blue silk; Mrs. O. Lounsbury in ashes of rose silk moire; Mrs. M. Lounsbury in crimson silk with chiffon and black marabow; Mrs. C. Plant in cream crepe with pink; Miss Daisy Robinson, in cream ninon with pink satin girdle; Miss A. Willoughby in bleu de ciel brocade; Miss E. McTavish in pink charmeuse with swansdown and shadow lace; Miss Fern Smith, in black lace and Miss Mina Smith, in pink crepe with rosebud trimming; Miss Fern Dean, in coral crepe with touches of black; Miss Blanche Dawson, in shell pink silk with valenciennes trimming; Miss Beatrice Campbell in Dolly Varden silk; Miss Gladys Bailey in cream with shadow lace tunic and bertha collar, and Miss R. E. Hickson in robin's egg blue ninon over satin.

One can see that fashions in Paris had a very close connection with the fair ladies of Wheatley.

The "roaring twenties" were celebrated in the community with a good deal of social events and particularly dances. This was soon to change in 1929 when on that "Black Friday", the stock market fell and the whole world became affected by the Great Depression.

In Wheatley, socializing took on a different, more sombre, note. Fishermen's services and banquets were introduced by Rev. Roulston of the United Church and later, also conducted by the Baptist congregation.

The 1932 Old Boys' Reunion, a brilliant success, led to the idea of holding a Free Fair, the first of it's kind in this part of Ontario. All the work was on a volunteer basis and costs were kept to a minimum.

The introduction of the Saturday Night Concerts, gave the local, talented children and adults the opportunity to perform in contests which were both entertaining and profitable for the merchants, as people from other communities came to see the performances and do their weekly shopping too.



The Johnson Family of Comber, talented musicians who staged vaudeville acts throughout Ontario, travelling in their home on wheels during the thirties.



A formal portrait of the Johnson family. Entertainers who performed for large audiences at the Wheatley Saturday Night Concerts.

One family of performers are well remembered for their music and song. The A. W. Johnson family of Comber developed a fine reputation for their talents. The father, mother, three sons, Walter, Vernon and Ron, and two daughters, Bernice and

Mildred, also travelled throughout Ontario in a home-built house trailer, presenting their vaudeville shows. Little Mildred was known to sing, tap-dance and play the piano all at the same time. Two year old Ronnie stole the show with his singing and tap-dancing, and Bernice, who won in music competitions at the C.N.E. wrote music as well as playing the piano, accordion and guitar.

Today Mildred Byrl Johnson Hall, teaches music in area schools and Bernice Johnson Leslie conducts a music studio in her home on Elm Street.

The community had a sense of neighbourliness which was fostered by the acts of kindness extended to the sick, the lonely and those in sorrow, by "special" people. One such person was Mrs. Barbara McNeilage, a tiny Scots woman with a tremendous capacity for giving. She had modest means, having been a widow for a number of years. Many young Wheatley brides walked down the aisle with a sprig of heather from "Aunt Barbara" for good luck and happiness. Many sick and sorrowing neighbours were lifted by the spirits of this woman, who would often present a little jar of Keiller jam from Scotland as a token. Her dream was to one day, travel back to her old home in Scotland, "but only to visit", she would say, for her home would always be in Wheatley.

Her dream came true one day when all the service clubs and other residents conducted a quiet

campaign and raised enough money to pay for her fare with a little extra "for spending". Mrs. MacNeilage was deeply touched and the donors were all rewarded with seeing the joy and happiness on her face.

Following her return, she was busily engaged in carrying on even harder than before. A short time later, while on a trip with her friends, Mrs. Tait, Bill Tait, and his wife, a tragic accident took the lives of the four people, and the loss was deeply felt by the whole community.

The example set by Barbara McNeilage is still talked about today, and her spirit of devotion and kindness to her neighbours is like a lesson out of the Good Book.

I have told Barbara's story because it is a personal one. When I came to Wheatley, thirty-one years ago, I met this little lady in Lee's grocery store where I worked as a part-time clerk. It was difficult for me to understand why, a person living all alone, could consume so much jam. I soon learned the reason and have never forgotten it.

As this book goes into production, plans are being finalized for a gigantic celebration in the village, another Old Boys' Reunion and Homecoming, to be written in the future annals of this community as the greatest celebration ever held in Wheatley.

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Lobzun Visuals

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