

*A History of  
Wallaceburg and Vicinity  
1804 to the Present*

*by*

*Frank Mann*

With the compliments  
and best wishes of  
Town of Wallaceton.

W. P. Adams  
MAYOR.

*A history of Wallaceburg and Vicinity*

*1804 to the present*

*by Frank Mann*

*April 7, 1968*

*Dedicated to those people  
who have made Wallaceburg  
and vicinity such a wonderful  
place in which to live*

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## Table of Contents

Message from the Municipality

Author's Forward

List of Illustrations and Maps

Chapter	1	Introduction
	2	The Baldoon Settlement
	3	Pioneer Living After Baldoon
	4	The Baldoon Mystery
	5	Wallaceburg's Birth and Growth
	6	Growth of Industries
	7	Neighbouring Communities
	8	Way of Life in Wallaceburg in the Late 1800's and Early 1900's
	9	Development of Local Government and Institutions
	10	Transportation and Lodging
	11	Boats and Navigation
	12	Floods and Fires
	13	Railroad Building
	14	A Misunderstanding: The Negro Story
	15	Some Statistics of Early Wallaceburg
	16	Stories of Islands and Rivers
	17	Ethnic Groups
	18	Summary



# THE TOWN OF WALLACEBURG

## WALLACEBURG, ONTARIO, CANADA

### *Message from the Municipality*

#### FORWARD

The Centennial Year 1967 of Canadian Confederation brought to many Canadians a new realization that we had not completed another 100 years but rather a time of colourful history of which we may be justly proud.

We, in Wallaceburg, felt the infectious fever of Canada's Centennial and looked to our past with pride. With this in mind your Town Council Commissioned Mr. Frank Mann of Wallaceburg to place, in book form, the knowledge gained by a life time hobby.

The people of Wallaceburg gratefully acknowledge the foresight, effort and interest of Frank Mann and his associates in making possible for our future citizens an insight of the trials and tribulations of our first citizens and the promise of a future greater Wallaceburg.

April fifth, 1969

Mayor  
E. Nigel Savage  
Corporation of the  
Town of Wallaceburg  
Ontario, Canada

OFFICE OF THE TOWN MANAGER

## Author's Forward

By compiling a history of Wallaceburg and area, the author has attempted to arouse interest amongst the local and former residents in the historical development of our community. In addition, it is anticipated that this book will serve as a much needed historical reference for students involved in research.

It is hoped that those who read the text will be impressed with the numerous hardships and inconveniences endured by our forefathers. Their sacrifices have aided in laying a firm foundation which has led to our prosperous mode of living today.

In correlating the data, countless hours of reading and research were necessary. Past issues of the Wallaceburg News and the Dominion Atlas of 1881 were of inestimable value. The Kent Historical Society-Papers and Addresses (1924) by Mr. R.H. Abraham, proved to be of excellent secondary reference for the Walpole Island section. In addition, articles by Mr. W.G. McGeorge, in connection with early surveying in the area, were very useful.

The actuality of this book would be impossible without the financial support provided by our municipal council. In particular, deep appreciation is expressed to His Worship, Mayor Nigel Savage for his much needed moral support. Mr. Lloyd Clark of Chatham was kind in allowing the use of the several Baldoon maps from his thesis. The author is grateful to members of his family for editorial comment and critique which would have been an unsurmountable burden to overcome without assistance.

I apologize for any inaccuracies or omissions. As this is my initial endeavour in a venture of this type, I trust the reader will be indulgent in overlooking any criticisms, in hopes that the enjoyment and benefit derived from this book will overshadow the inevitable errors that may be found.

Wallaceburg, Ont.

April, 1969

FRANK L. MANN



## List of Illustrations

The Baldoon Mystery  
Steamer John Lee Senior  
The Old Sydenham Glass Factory, Showing Flint House  
Sydenham River, East Branch, 1906  
Duncan and James Street Intersection  
Nelson Street  
The First Baptist Church 1866  
Fire Hall and Council Chambers  
George Hill Riverhouse  
Arlington Hotel  
The Dominion  
Collop  
Log Jam in the Sydenham 1882  
The Cramer Barn  
The Beattie Block  
The First Electric Car from Chatham 1904  
1903 Wallaceburg Lacrosse Club  
1912 Wallaceburg Baseball Team  
Wallaceburg Band of 1914  
James Street, South Side

## List of Maps

The Trek of the Baldoon Settlers, 1803 and 1804  
1810 Baldoon  
Lands Granted to Selkirk - - - The Baldoon Settlement  
Natural Drainage and Natural Vegetation  
Survey of Lots for Settlers



# Chapter One

## Introduction

Wallaceburg is located in Southwestern Ontario on the Sydenham, at the forks of the River. It is an energetic industrial-resort town only nine miles distance from the International Boundary in the St. Clair River. Almost half of the town's population, according to a recently completed Urban Renewal Study, is under twenty years of age. The total population at the last census was 10,468. Growth since 1965 has brought the population from 7,957 to 10,468. Population is predominately British, accounting for 59.7 percent. French ancestry accounts for 18.0 percent and Dutch ancestry accounts for 15.8 percent. Fifty-seven and seven-tenths percent of the population are Protestants while the Roman Catholics account for thirty-seven and nine-tenths percent.

Education needs are served by several modern schools. One large Secondary High School of approximately 1,200 students contains academic classes from Grade nine to thirteen inclusive. This composite school also provides a complete line of industrial shops and commercial departments for training to university level. Placed in different parts of the town are five Public schools, five Roman Catholic schools and one Calvin Christian School (Dutch).

A large modern Municipal Building houses the Police Department, Magistrate's Court, Town Manager, Town Engineer's Office, Clerk's Office and Fire Department.

Construction of new gas lines, watermains and deep sewers is now in progress. Most streets are paved. Churches of most denominations are well established and have large buildings. Those represented are Roman Catholic, United, Presbyterian, Baptist, Anglican, Salvation Army, Pentecostal, Christian Reformed, Latter-Day Saints and Jehovah's Witnesses.

Industrially the town prospers with many modern factories and many smaller feeder plants. A railroad, an airport, highways and a navigable river provide outside transportation connections.

Service Clubs play a major role in the town's social life.

The community is healthy and growing. Growth predictions are very positive, and soon Wallaceburg will be Canada's next city.

How did it all begin? What people and events gave birth to this community as it exists today? This is the story I am about to unfold. To compile such a story was an interesting task.

It must be remembered that many stories and happenings were handed down to us by word of mouth by the older people. Many of them had very little education and were unable to write down the events. I have been conscious of this and have tried to sift out fact from fiction and to journalize events and other facts that I believe are authentic.

# Chapter Two

## Baldoon Settlement

The history of Wallaceburg begins with the Selkirk or Baldoon Settlement. Fortunately, the original settlement was a failure because of many disappointing backs that were encountered by its founder and the poor settlers he brought from Scotland. However, it did pave the way for the eventual founding of Wallaceburg. Baldoon settlers who survived the disease and other hardships and stayed in the area worked the land and prospered and attracted more and more settlers.

Following the battle of Colloden in 1746, in Scotland, the family clans and clan chiefs were widely separated and greatly disorganized. This resulted in uncertainty for the farmers who had been dependent on their clan chiefs for land and protection. But as a result went on, the estates could be run more profitably as sheep ranches and this forced the farmers from the land.

The Earl of Selkirk realized the plight of the farmers and was sympathetic toward their unfortunate position. He thought these people would make good colonists if suitable arrangements could be made for land in America. This led to Selkirk's World Colonies at Prince Edward Island, Red River in Manitoba and our Baldoon Settlement.

### WHY THE BALDOON SITE?

Selkirk's land manager investigated this area and found about 950 acres located in what eventually became the Township of Dover, County of Kent. It was arable and suitable in his opinion, for colonization. Selkirk acquired the land and made plans for the subsequent colonization.

### SURVEYING

The first surveyor in this area was Mr. Idredell. He surveyed the Northern part of Dover, the shores of Lake St. Clair up to the mouth of the Chenal Ecarte, and this waterway to Big Bear Creek (Sydenham).

Continuing along the river, he surveyed to the purchase line of 1790 (based on the Thames River. Unfortunately Idredell died of malaria in 1798. His successor was deputy surveyor William Hambly, who was sent from York (Ontario). Early in July of the year 1800 Hambly began to survey the northern part of Dover, which adjoined the Selkirk farm. The surveying was by Selkirk's request he believed an earlier surveyor, Augustus Jones, had already laid out a row of plots along Bear Creek, on his land. Hambly, unfortunately, also fell victim to malaria.

### THE NAME

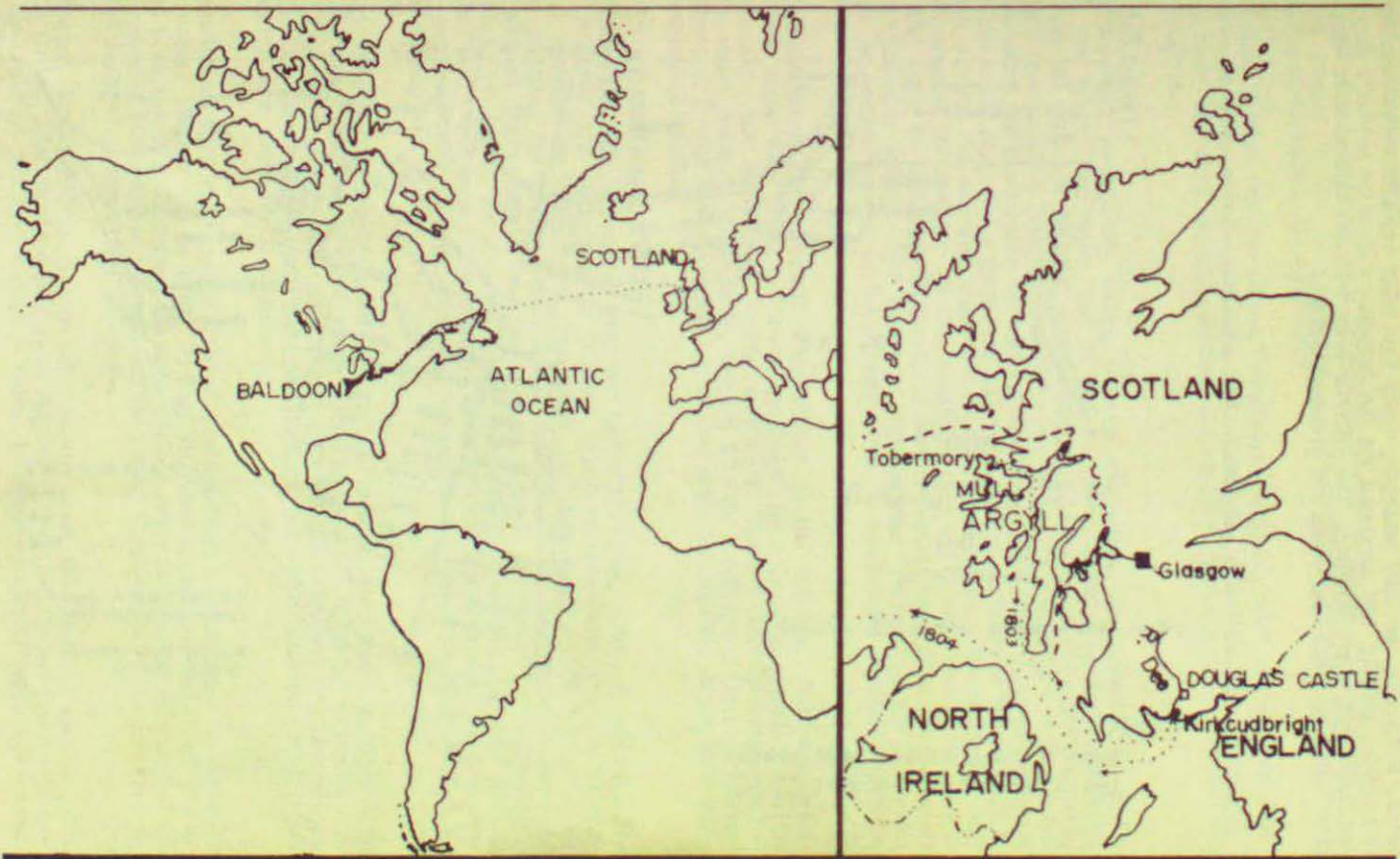
Selkirk named the settlement after "Baldoon Sands", near the home of the Selkirk family adjacent to St. Marys Island in South-West Scotland.

### SETTLEMENT

The patent for the Baldoon farm was granted to Lord Selkirk on March 18, 1793. It consisted of 4200 acres. The northern part was wooded land indented on the East and West with prairie. The unwooded part was an irregular piece of land about 1000 acres. "It commenced at the North West Angle at the Eastern limit of the Chenal Ecarte on the line between the Townships of Dover and Chatham to the North East forming the North boundary, thence Easterly along the line dividing said townships to the river Sydenham about three-quarters of a mile thence South Westerly along the Easterly boundary of the said stream to the place of the beginning, the line between the said townships of Dover and Chatham". It was planned that fifty-acre plots were to be given, free hold, to the settlers as soon as they became cleared of their indebtedness to Selkirk.

FIGURE 14.

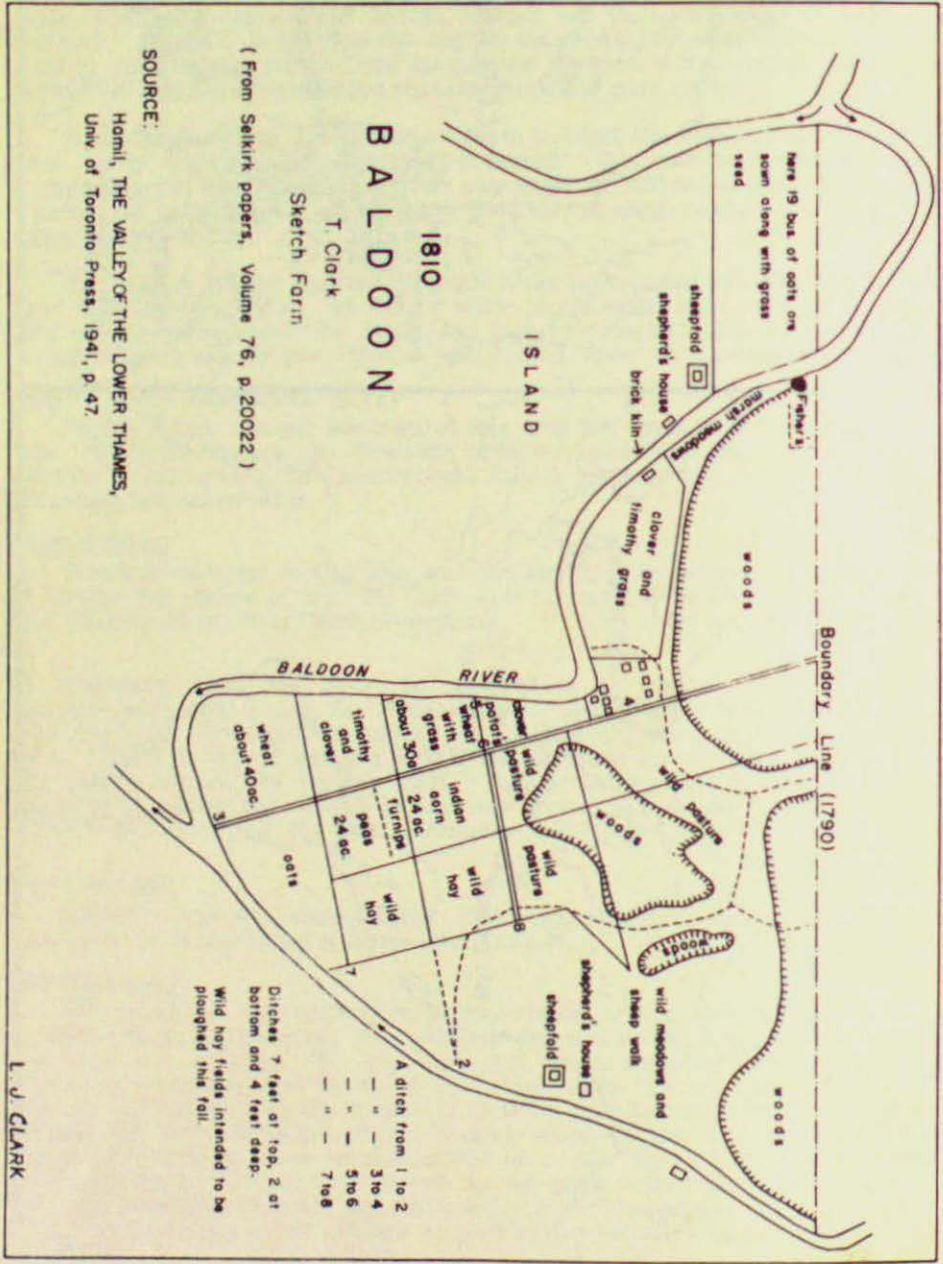
THE TREK OF THE BALDOON SETTLERS, 1803 and 1804



Page 9

L. J. CLARK

In July of 1804, Selkirk left the settlement to meet the prospective settlers. In his absence, McDonnell, the land manager, could look after any unforeseen situations which would arise. Selkirk had arranged for the carpenters from the settler's ship to travel ahead and begin house-building. The settlers would welcome this advance work on their shelter, after an exhausting ocean and overland journey.



(From Selkirk papers, Volume 76, p. 20022 )

SOURCE:  
Hornell, THE VALLEY OF THE LOWER THAMES,  
Univ of Toronto Press, 1941, p. 47.

L. J. CLARK

Also, a trail known as the Baldoon road was cleared to connect to the neighboring settlement on the Thames River.

It was with great optimism that Selkirk travelled Eastward. At Niagara he purchased 5,000 pounds of live beef, 50 ewes, 1,000 bushels of corn and two scows for transporting materials back to the settlement.

At Kingston, Selkirk met the fifteen travelworn families. Most of them had come from the Isle of Mull, nearly penniless, and indentured to Selkirk. Once more they continued on their westward journey, perhaps more eagerly, because they were nearing their goal, Baldoon.

## **DISAPPOINTMENT**

Meanwhile, back at Baldoon, things were not progressing as planned. The ship's carpenters, and others who were sent in advance, were afraid of the nearby Indians, and fled away to Sandwich without accomplishing their purpose. The merino sheep, which Selkirk purchased in Niagara, had to be driven overland through a wolf-infested area. Rattlesnakes and black bears were numerous, even at the colony site. One account stated that one could stop at any given spot and count five or six bears in the immediate area. Upon arrival the colonists were left on the prairie banks of the river with only improvised material for shelter. In this condition, they had to remain until the men of the party had time to build log cabins for shelter to protect them from the cold of an approaching Canadian winter. The centre of interest was "Baldoon Castle", a wooden house, built as Selkirk's home on his private farm. It was located on the Snye, on the North Bend near the "Dark" bend.

Being Highlanders, the colonists were unused to the low land. Not being acclimatized, they were easy prey to fevers produced from decaying vegetable matter. At this time also, the water level was extremely low. Much of their land had only recently been under water. These facts, coupled with the hardships of the long journey and the effects of a cold Canadian winter produced crippling results. In the first year, 42 of the original party died.

## **ATTEMPTS AT ORGANIZATION**

Spring brought with it renewed hope for the little colony. Attempts were made at farming. However, the warm weather brought with it more malaria fevers and dysentery, which crippled the farm work. Meanwhile, in Scotland, Lord Selkirk heard of the misfortune plaguing the colony. In a letter to McDonell, the manager at Baldoon, he strongly advised the colonists to move up the river to the "forks" (Wallaceburg's present site), or out to the river St. Clair, or southward along the projected Baldoon road to Chatham. McDonell stubbornly disregarded these instructions. This tempered Scotsman was disgusted with his charges, calling them "rapacious, discontented, indolent, and a filthy lot."

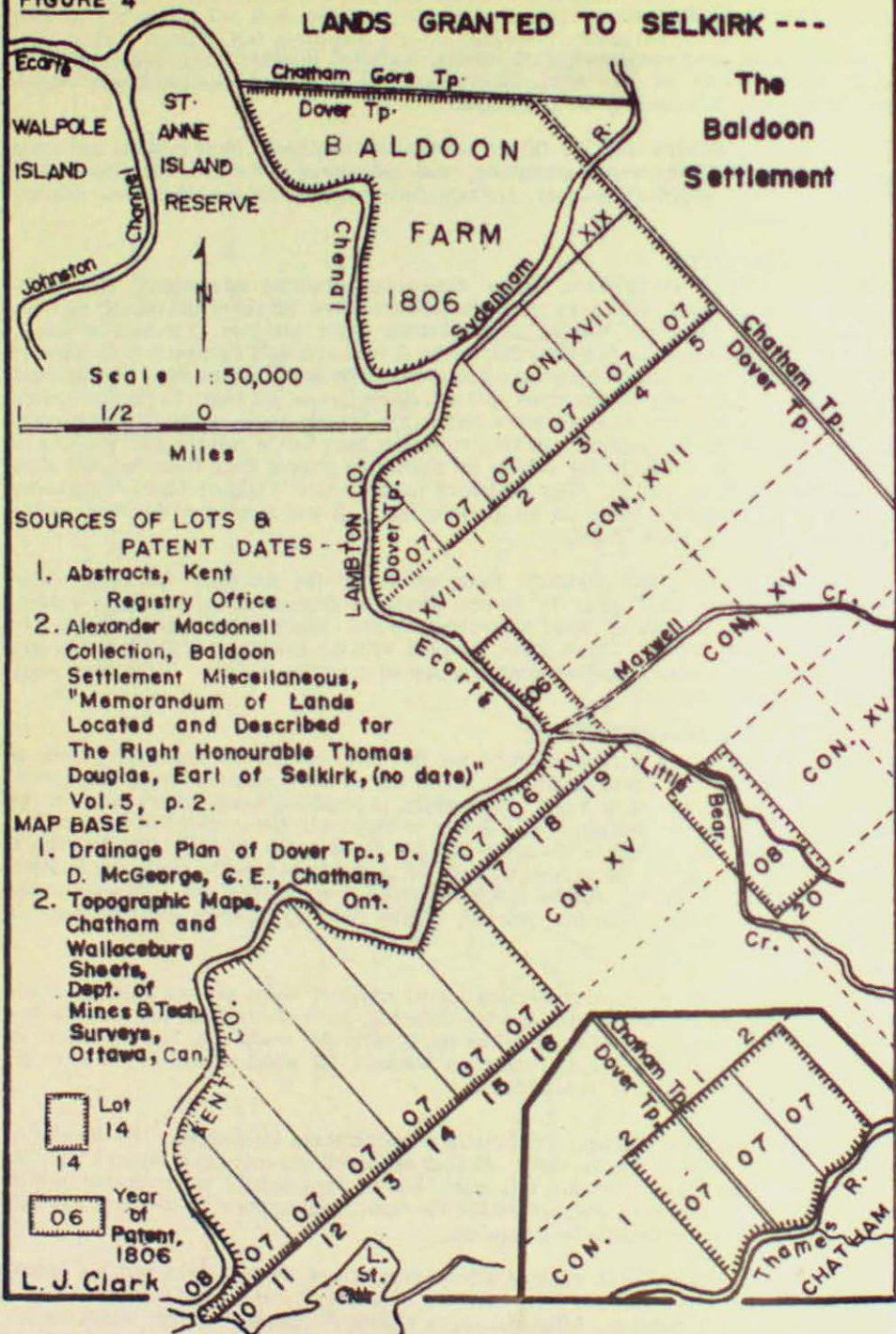
Selkirk attempted to acquire additional land adjacent to his present holdings at the colony. He wanted a grant of the Shawnee township, Gore of Chatham, and Sombra Township. This attempt was of no avail as the government would give him no control of the Islands (St. Anne's and Walpole) and river borders, for which he asked. As a result, he ordered the farm temporarily abandoned.

McDonell haughtily disregarded Selkirk's instructions to abandon. He decided to give the colony another try in 1806. At first McDonell did not advise Selkirk that 300 sheep had been lost to rattlesnakes and scab. Later, when Selkirk was informed of this loss, he censured McDonell, who in turn left the farm. Management of the farm now fell to John McDonald who proved to be incapable.

In August, McDonell was rehired after having spent three months with his family at York. By that time thirteen lots along Big Bear Creek and Chenal Ecarte were occupied. At the East passage, Allan and Angus McDonald operated a ferry which connected the colony to the Baldoon Road.

FIGURE 4

LANDS GRANTED TO SELKIRK ---

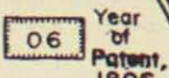


SOURCES OF LOTS & PATENT DATES -

1. Abstracts, Kent Registry Office.
2. Alexander Macdonell Collection, Baldoon Settlement Miscellaneous, "Memorandum of Lands Located and Described for The Right Honourable Thomas Douglas, Earl of Selkirk, (no date)" Vol. 5, p. 2.

MAP BASE - -

1. Drainage Plan of Dover Tp., D. D. McGeorge, G. E., Chatham, Ont.
2. Topographic Maps, Chatham and Wallaceburg Sheets, Dept. of Mines & Tech. Surveys, Ottawa, Can.



L. J. Clark

In the following year, 1807, Selkirk was granted 2,800 acres, South of the original grant, for having located fourteen settlers.

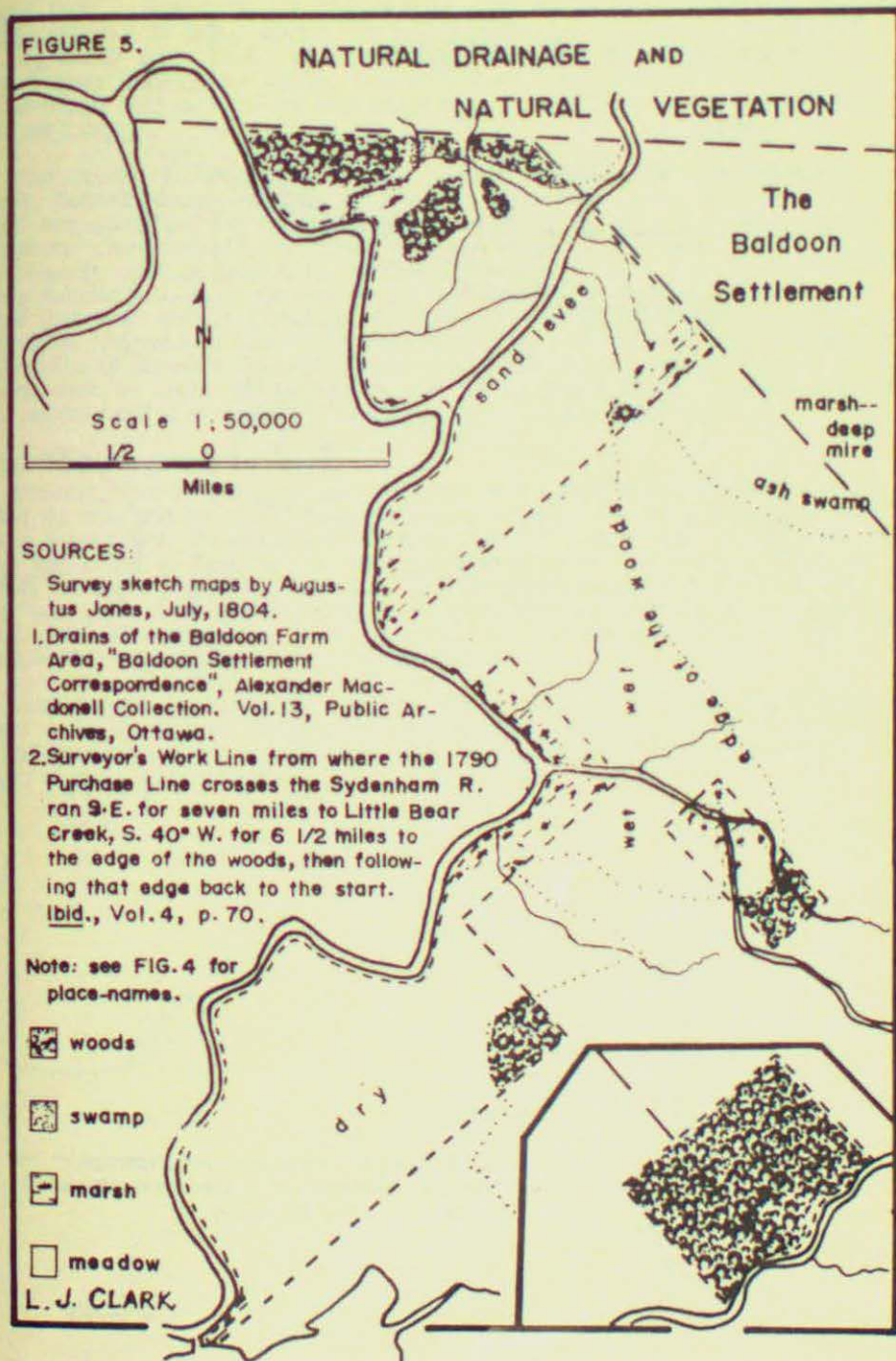
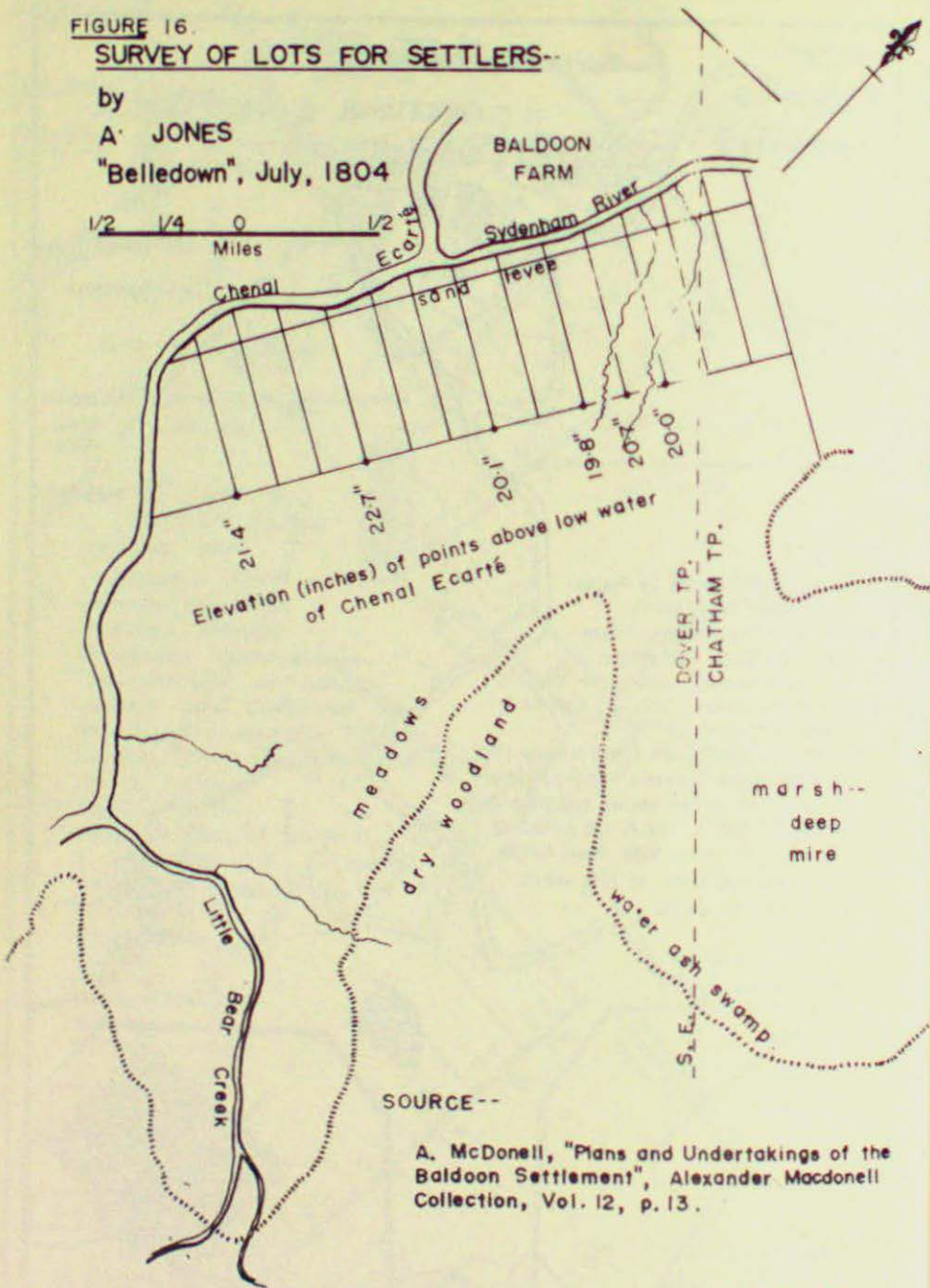


FIGURE 16.

SURVEY OF LOTS FOR SETTLERS--

by  
A. JONES  
"Belledown", July, 1804



SOURCE--

A. McDonell, "Plans and Undertakings of the Baldoon Settlement", Alexander Macdonell Collection, Vol. 12, p. 13.

L. J. CLARK



McDonell's opinion of the settlers did not improve. He compared them to the Chippewas and Ottawas for their love of whiskey and filthiness. Neither had he gained any skill in following Selkirk's orders. Instructions were given to reduce all expenses at the farm. Selkirk wanted McDonell to open lots on the Baldoon Road. McDonell paid no attention to these orders. He took up permanent residence at Baldoon and moved his family from York. He reported to Selkirk that the people on the farm wanted to trade their holdings for wooded lots on the Bear Creek. Selkirk in return instructed that McDonell hold on to all the land and to keep the marsh lands intact, as he had some plans for drainage.

Many settlers moved off the Baldoon property, although they were still indebted to Selkirk. Selkirk was now losing patience with his manager and, also, with the farm. McDonell was dismissed and the colony's accounts were turned over to Thomas Clark of Queenston. Clark carefully scrutinized McDonell's records and to the surprise of some, no dishonesty could be found in the accounts. However, in Clark's estimation, there had been a definite lack of general supervision by McDonell. As for the settlers, Clark concluded that they were a turbulent, discontented, and ungrateful lot. He could see no appreciable improvements in the surroundings of the settlers, and really nothing of any consequence to show for Selkirk's years of toil, thought, and expense. In fact, the only compensation he could find for Selkirk was 500 bushels of wheat. This was made into flour and disposed of in Montreal. Clark's advice for Selkirk was "SELL."

### **MORE TROUBLE FOR SELKIRK**

However, Selkirk could not sell, at least for the time being! The war of 1812 prevented the sale and the farm continued to be a liability. The war's end in 1814 provided Selkirk some relief. He was able to lease the farm to a man called William Jones. Then came full relief to Selkirk. In 1818 he sold the farm subject to Jones' lease, to John McNab, a former Hudson's Bay trader. It is interesting to note that two years later the farm was sold, in a Sheriff's sale to William Jones and James Wood for the price of \$1,281. Selkirk's remaining lands in Dover were purchased by Thomas Clark. This ended Selkirk's connection with the Baldoon Farm.

Lord Selkirk had earnestly tried to make a success of the colony but believed it was a complete failure. Selkirk died in 1820 at Pau, south France, little knowing that he had kindled a spark which would give rise to the prosperous and successful community in which we now reside.

## Chapter Three

### Pioneer Living After Baldoon

(1) **FARMING** By 1810, the Baldoon farm area had made many advances from its troubled beginnings. Maps prepared for Selkirk show many present day roads laid out. Ditches were seven feet deep and two feet wide at the bottom. Farms were 40 acres and 130 acres. Crops grown were wheat, corn, (usually 2 acres), turnips, peas, clove and timothy. Sheep walks were laid out. Baldoon "castle" was the central building with a cluster of houses around it. There was a brick kiln, and also a stone still for the making of "Scotch" whiskey. Of course, barns were erected for cattle and sheep. Sheep herd houses were to be found also on St. Anne's Island. A unique arrangement for covering large stocks of hay stood near the stock barn. It consisted of a cottage-shape roof supported by a single stick of timber about 81 inches square, planted firmly in the ground. The roof could be raised or lowered at will by means of a block and tackle. Near the river, a huge warehouse was erected. It stood on piles high above the water. A windmill was also built for grinding grain. The resulting flour was either sifted at home or at the mill by a hand machine. The foundation of this mill could be seen many years later, and the location became a landmark to passing sailers who named it Windmill Point.

(2) **NEW SETTLERS** Charles Fisher received his honourable discharge from the British Army after the War of 1812 and settled his family on the Snye. He was an arm blacksmith and carried on his trade near the present site of the Arnold farm. On the Fisher farm there were remains of an old Indian fort. It was a semi-circular mound and enclosed about five acres. The earth was mounded about five feet high and had probably been surmounted by a strong palisade. The opening faced the south branch of Running Creek. Within the walled semi-circle and near the creek were several small mounds. These apparently were graves containing the remains of Indians killed in battle. Indian relics such as arrowheads, pipes of various patterns and ornaments of unglazed pottery, have been found there. Trees of two to three feet in diameter grew on the mound indicating that the fort existed some time before the Baldoon Settlers.

(3) **WAY OF LIFE** The settlers did not have to suffer from the cold or hunger. Wood was always close at hand and an abundance of fresh meat was obtainable at all times. The forest abounded in game and the river provided them with choice varieties of fish. Fruit too was plentiful. Plums, thimbleberries, black and red raspberries grew in abundance.

Logging bees were common throughout the dry months of August and September. A "bee" generally ended with a dance and, of course, a jug of whiskey was considered indispensable at such times.

Clothing was all homemade. Wool was sheared, carded and spun by hand, and the coloured usually by a dye obtained from butternut bark. It was then woven on a handloom.

Boots and shoes were made by a shoe maker who went from house to house, shoeing the whole family, usually once a year.

Cooking was all done in the fireplace which was equipped with a crane on which kettles were hung. Baking was done in a dutch oven before the fire.

In the midst of the pioneer toil there had to be time for fun and, also, for courtship. Young couples became acquainted at house dances or at husking bees. At such a bee, the unmarried young, romantically-minded man was perhaps the most eager worker. This was due to an inviting custom among the pioneers. Girls and boys, men and women gathered around a huge window of ears, placed on the floor. The finder

a red ear was entitled to a kiss from any lady present. Through this "red ear" practice, many courtships budded.

Then, sooner or later came the wedding. The whole community buzzed with excitement. Of course, everyone was invited, not by printed invitation but by word of mouth. It was necessary to make a trip to Chatham to procure a clergyman. This trip through the forest and back usually took four days in all. The vehicle would be a lumber wagon drawn by a yoke of oxen. More often the ceremony would be performed in nearby Algonac by a Justice of the Peace.

Rivalling a wedding for excitement would be an election. Votes were cast in Chatham. Two or three wagons would be decorated with flags and would go about picking up voters. A piper would work up excitement and a jug of whiskey would liven the arguments.

Pioneer life was not the least bit glamorous. The country was rich but rugged. Wolves were numerous at that time, as told by a story handed down through the generations. It states that in the course of a few hours, one pioneer counted thirty-six bears going towards the Dover plains.

Money was not plentiful then. One old story tells of the hardship in raising the price of a one-hundred acre farm. Fifty cents was the amount required. The man in question had one English shilling but how to raise the other twenty-five cents was the question. He travelled from his home to Baby Point, up the St. Clair River as far as Courtright. Here he crossed the St. Clair River and travelled down the American shore to Roberts Landing. All these miles, and he was not able to obtain work! No work even at the price of a shilling. The next day, while working in his garden, he turned up a piece of silver, probably an Indian ornament. A thought struck him! "Why not make a quarter?" He went to the house, obtained the necessary tools and with his English Shilling for a pattern, cut out the piece of silver. By pounding, he obtained a slight impression from the coin. After chewing it around the edge to make it appear as old as possible, he passed it off on a collector, a few days later.

I have often heard the old people tell about a friend carrying two or three cakes of tallow in a bag on his shoulder all the way to Windsor where he sold it for enough to pay his taxes.

Salt was a luxury with the pioneers. Its value then is judged by the fact that it was considered a good trade to exchange seven bags of wheat for a barrel of salt.

I remember the old people telling another story of the early settlers. Apparently, a large amount of specie belonging to Lord Selkirk was buried on St. Anne's Island, and people for many years searched for it with divining rods.

(4) BEAUTY OF THE SNYE Although the marshes bred disease, many a settler was enchanted by the beauty of the misty marsh, the emerald depths of the swift Snye and the strong virgin forest. The marsh was alive with bull frogs, and on a still summer night, one could hear a rumbling chorus. The old grandfather frog would bulge his cheeks and give an echoing croak. Across the river another, and another would take up the chant until the whole settlement resounded with the bellowing cry: . . . . BALDOON, BALDOON

"Swift as an arrow from the huntsman's bow  
And as blue as the summer sky  
It sweeps away past the Baldoon place  
The dear old river Snye."

## **-The Old Homestead On The Snye-**

How I love it, how I love it,  
The old homestead on the Snye,  
Oh I never can forget it  
With the river sweeping by,

On that dear familiar river  
Where the rushes fringe the bank,  
Where the willows bend and whisper  
And the reeds grow tall and rank.

There half hidden by an orchard  
And broad fields of waving corn  
Stood a house --- I'll ne'er forget it  
The house where I was born.

Of in memories dream I see it  
Standing there among the trees  
With its door thrown widely open  
To the cool, refreshing breeze.

And back in the posy garden  
That once was my mother's pride  
Bloomed the crimson silken poppies  
Down the wall on either side.

By the water stood our boat house  
And the dock we thought so fine  
The dock where steamers landed  
In the days of Auld Lang Syne.

Years have passed since I last saw it,  
That old homestead on the Snye,  
Still I love it, oh, I love it,  
With the river sweeping by.

## **-Chenal Ecarte-**

**(the lost channel)**

Bright, eddy, shimmering, current.  
Have you really lost your way?  
From the course of common torrent,  
Of the lake, the river, bay?

Men call you "Waif stretch of water,  
That has run from other astray,  
Your Neptune, the old Sea, God's daughter,  
A madcap, so blithesome and bray"

We've drifted with boat songs as lovers,  
Gay, heedless of rudder or sail,  
We have whistled to keep up our courage,  
When the breezes were blowing a gale.

Thru' marshland and glade we have wandered,  
The sport of the winds and tide  
The days of that light childhood laughter  
Are lost in the gulf deep and wide.

I'm drifting from my moorings, fair water,  
From banks that in childhood I plied,  
I'm drifting on Time's swift flowing river,  
And needful as you are my guide.

We are both sweeping on to the ocean,  
Through channels chance fortune has made,  
We shall fade both at last in its bosom  
As infinities in infinite fade.

## -The River Road-

Long gone with the past are the pioneer days  
When the Riverside road was only a blaze  
And the Indian lurked like a beast of prey,  
While the ox teams went lolling along the way.  
But ox team and red man and birch bark canoe  
Are passed like a dream from the River road.

Then came the stage coach with its rumbling din  
Full bulging with passengers outside and in  
All fresh from the motherland over the sea,  
In search of new homes in the land of the free  
They chopped and they cleared and they ploughed and they sowed  
And passed in their turn from the River road.

The railroad came next and thus ended the age  
Of the pioneer in the toll gate and stage  
And the landlord, that soul of mirth and good will  
Long since with the stage driver, sleeps in the Hill.  
All gone - after doing the duty they owed  
Old mother in toil by the River road.

The valley now echoes with whistles and wheels  
Of railroad and tram cars and automobiles.  
A merciless, merchantile, "serve me and go"  
Days coming and going with no after glow.  
A money-mad pleasure-bound top heavy load  
Profanes the dream scenes of the River Road.

Could we but turn back a few pages of time  
And see the old hills in their primitive prime.  
But past locks the doors upon all that has been  
And future is something no mortal has seen.  
Today tis our duty to lighten the load  
Of weary who travel the River Road.

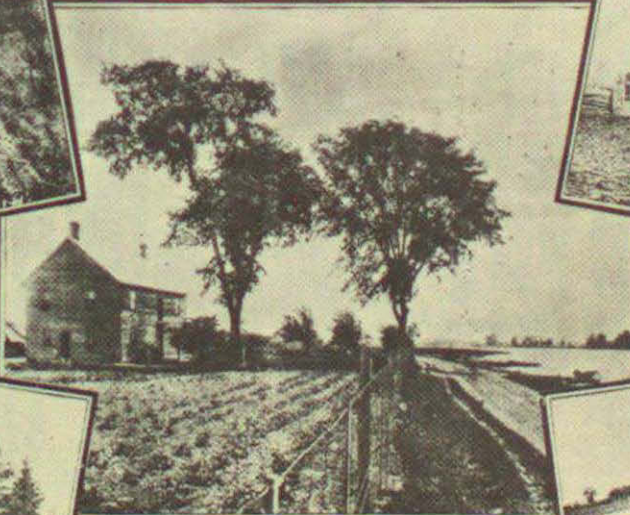
# The Baldoon Mystery



HERE DISAPPEARED CHAS. FREDERICK



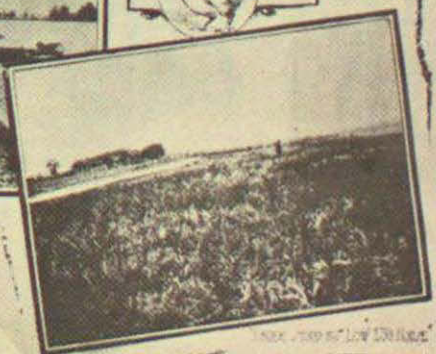
ABANDONED BY THE BALDOON



THE HOUSE OF TWO GHOSTS WHOSE SPOOKS PLAYED PARTIAL



WHERE WITTEL, FURBER & HOLTS



THE PLACE OF THE LOW LON HOUSE

## The Baldoon Mystery

# Chapter Four

## The Baldoon Mystery

With the dispersal of the Baldoon Settlement, many families moved to other locations. One of these families, John McDonald, settled on the Snye, a few miles westward, and built a house. He had a son, Daniel McDonald, who after years of honest toil, also built a house nearby. It is this family which found itself involved in very mysterious happenings beginning in the year 1838. The Baldoon Mystery Story described once more, the hardships of the pioneer families, what they were forced to endure in settling the country in those early and trying times.

The story described what was called "witchcraft". "Witchcraft" deprived the McDonalds of their home, crops and stock. Being superstitious they had no answers to the mysteries, no way to combat it, and had to live through two years of untold hardship, losing almost everything they possessed, until the "happenings" suddenly stopped.

With our advantages of education and understanding, the Baldoon Mystery seems very difficult to believe. Why would people be so disturbed by these happenings? We must, however, project ourselves back a hundred years or more and think about it. Here the country was dense forest, with few roads, no modern conveniences, no neighbours for miles around. There was no police protection and one had to depend entirely on his own resources for survival. We can understand that fear for survival was a great factor in the peoples lives. This fear could only be combatted with their faith and fear of God. We can realize the tragedy and their suspense when faced with an experience they could not control. It was with such a situation that the family of Dan McDonald found itself, as the victims in the "Baldoon Mystery".

Many of the people who lived at the time the mystery took place offered different interpretations. Numerous people swore true their stories of actually seeing and experiencing the many mysterious events. Others of the time shrugged off the stories as heresy or that the stories were imagined by minds soaked by too much whiskey.

Whether you believe the whole story or not, some of the events actually did occur. The McDonalds did lose their home, belongings, stocks and peace of mind.

To those opinions which have gone before, I would like to add my own explanation, which is as follows:

"A family connected with the Baldoon settlers lived on the North Branch of the Sydenham, which is to the east four or five miles and running parallel to the Snye. This family wanted land to enlarge their farm. The land they wanted was part of the Crown land reserved by the McDonald family who lived on the Snye. In between the two farms on the Crown land lived some Indians. They had on their land a sacred burial ground. McDonald would not sell his land to the farmer from the Sydenham. Being Scotsmen and being stubborn, a feud soon developed between the families. The farmer from the Sydenham had a plan for revenge. It involved the Indians and their sacred burial ground. He desecrated the cemetery secretly, and blamed McDonald. He suggested to the Indians the using of the "white-man's way of revenge". This, he told them, would involve harassing the McDonalds day and night. Under the farmer's guidance, the Indians shot flaming arrow, loaded muskets with stones, and shot out windows, poisoned livestock, and caused other alarming events from nearby hiding places. In the meantime, the Sydenham farmer tried to be friendly with McDonald, and played down any suspicions that McDonald might have. Soon, however, the Sydenham farmer was unsure as to how to handle the situation, which was now getting out of hand.

The Indians carried on their cunning activities for over a year, and all the while the "mysterious happenings" were being widely publicized. At last, the farmer on the Sydenham brought the Indians under control. But how to provide an explanation for the mystery and to forever allay any suspicions in his direction, was the problem. After some thought he invented the story of the "Black Goose" and how its killing ended the trouble for McDonald. Thus, is my explanation for the happenings as they occurred.

The story of the "mysteries" received publicity in Detroit papers. Some years later, the "White Star" steamship line, used the mysterious story to their business advantage. They were at the time running excursions to Highbanks on Walpole Island. They would stop there because it was a good picnic site. As an added attraction to their St. Clair River cruise, they would travel up the Snye, past the Baldoon mystery site and retell the strange events in their every detail to the passengers.



# Chapter Five

## Wallaceburgs Birth and Growth

In the 'teens and twenties, some of the settlers began to move up the Snye River to the "Forks." Here the banks were covered by dense forest whose gloomy giants stood even at the water's edge. At this time, the Indians told a story about the area. Before the Baldoon settlers came, a French Commander with his voyageurs and guides had camped at the "Forks" on his way up to Lake Huron. Perhaps it was LaSalle. A cannon ball was found embedded in a large Elm tree which had many years of growth around it. This was near the present site of our Library.

According to information compiled in 1822, the following people lived in Wallaceburg and surrounding area:

Hector McDonald, Widow McDonald, Hector McLean, Angus McDougal, John McKenzie, Archie McDougall, Hugh McDonald, Widow Brown, Widow McDougall, Angus McDonald, Daniel McPherson, Laughlin McDougall, Wm. Caldwell, K. Gillmore, William Jones, Francois Cadotte, John McNabb, Charles Fisher, John McDonald, William McDonald, John McDonald.

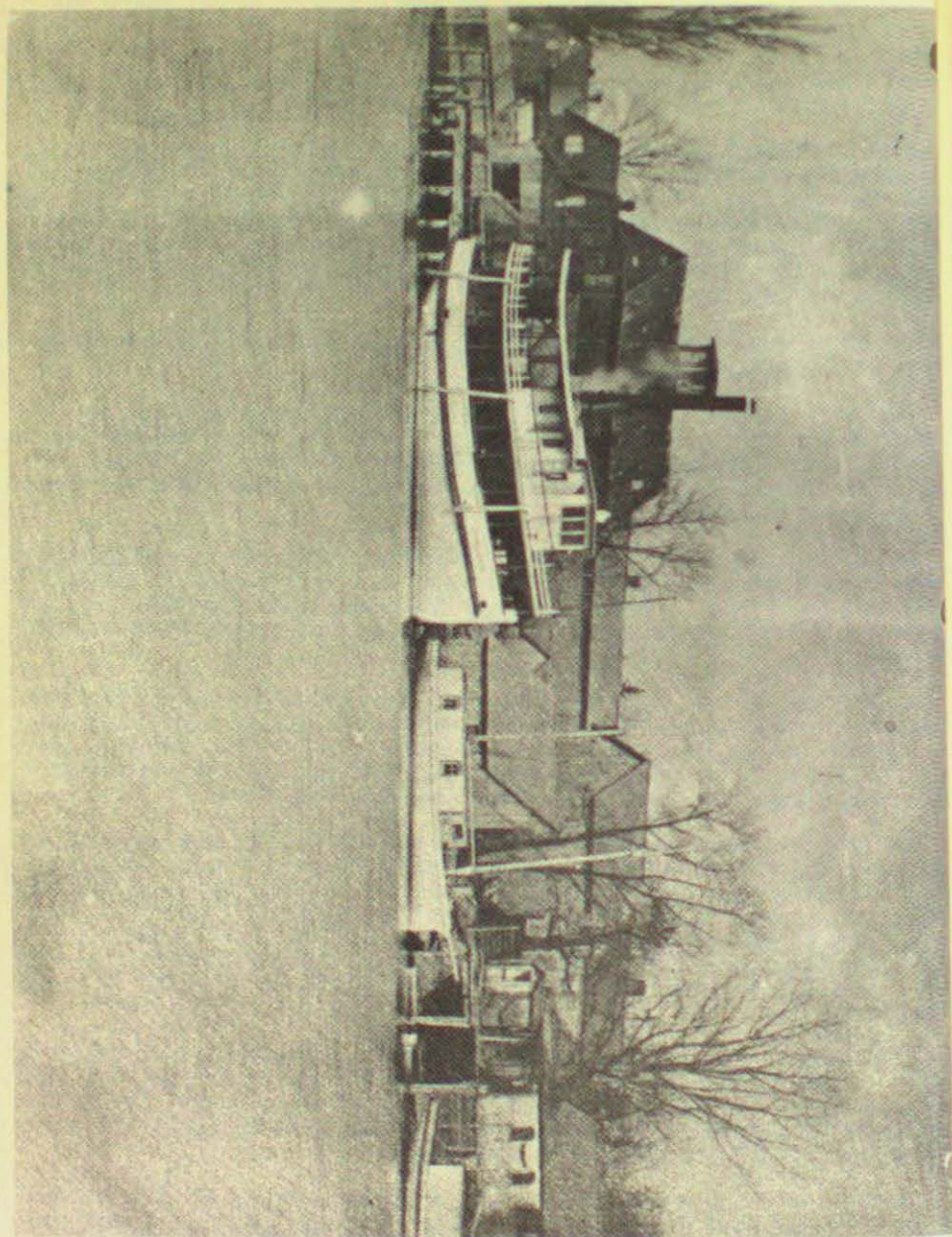
One of the ambitious settlers, Laughlin McDougall, turned his log dwelling into an Indian Truck Store, and did a flourishing trade. In its early days the community was known as "The Forks". But colloquially, it had another name which was "The Forty Thieves". This was the Indian name in reaction to the white traders who tried to cheat the Indians.

In 1834, when a Post Office was established, a more dignified name was demanded. Postmaster, Hugh McCallum, suggested Wallaceburg, in honour of the great Scottish hero. As originally written, the name was "Wallaceburgh", and if the Scottish pronunciation of Edinburgh is any guide, the pioneer pronunciation was probably "Wallaceboro". Quite early, though, the Americanized "burg" came into general use.

In time, both north and south of the river buildings crowded back the forests and warehouses and wharves fringed the stream. The crossing of the stream was by a primitive scow ferry. A schoolhouse was built to serve the budding community. The small building was erected on north Nelson St., and its first master was Captain Fish. It was a dual purpose building, also serving as municipal building. A church was erected in 1842 by the Wesleyan Methodists. In March 1846, Wallaceburg was made a port of entry with Colonel Bell in charge of Customs. In 1850 the 5th Division Court was set up with John Lillie as Clerk.

Soon industries came into existence. In 1852 Mr. Bates, an eccentric gentleman, built a sawmill on his suburban estate "Batehampton" which was located at the lower end of the village. The mill was the largest of its kind in Western Ontario. Two or three years later the rural Marsh Mill was built at the east end of the South side. This heralded the beginning of the lumbering era for Wallaceburg.

Wallaceburg' location on a deep and easily navigable river, and the close proximity of timber transformed the sleepy village into a lumbering centre. The lumber industry became the backbone of the community. Wallaceburg's houses, fences and the occasional sidewalks were all of wood. Booms of staves, millions of them, lay in the long reaches of the Sydenham. Stocks of timber occupied every available spot along the banks. Logs by the thousands lined the roads and clearings. Timber became "King". This was the lumberman's paradise. His inflated wallet and well lined pockets gladdened the hearts of the villagers. This "Boom" was somewhat dampened by a recession in the years 1857-8. However, after a few years the Community staged a characteristic comeback aided by the productivity of the surrounding farms. Of Wallaceburg in this transition, the historian Sutor writes:



STEAMER JOHN LEE SENIOR tied up behind Lee Brothers Marina.

"It presented for some years a somewhat dilapidated appearance. It was dirty. Its drawing streets on the North side was innocent of sidewalks, and was composed of, at best, a half dozen very ordinary stores."

In the decade following 1860, Wallaceburg grew, slowly but surely. This era brought the Hay, Beatty, Forhan, Fraser, McDonald and Scott families. Then and even more after 1870, the lumber trade feeding on the receding forests, stimulated rapid growth. Large fleets of steam and sailing craft and tow barges came, many of which sailed the Sydenham as far as it was navigable.

In 1841 exports were only \$5,758. By 1870 they reached \$227,478. In 1871, Wallaceburg newspaper history began when a young man named, Asa Cronk, arrived with a printing press and the idea that the bustling community needed a newspaper. Unfortunately, a fire later wiped out the entire office and put the "Western Advocate" out of business. In 1871, the light ship Colchester was built here. In 1878, bridges over the North and East branches of the Sydenham were built.

The year 1874 heralded a very important event. Wallaceburg was incorporated as a village, the act taking effect on January 1st, 1875. This was followed by the erection of a municipal building, the 'Town Hall' in 1876. It stood for many years on the present location of the Wallaceburg Hydro Building. By 1880, the Village had a population of 1,526, and an Assessment of approximately \$180,000. The new prosperity was reflected in the improved surroundings.

Outstanding in the early stages of Wallaceburg's transition from a lumbering village to an industrial town was Captain James W. Steinhoff. He was of Dutch Ancestry and spent most of his boyhood in Chatham. In 1850 his family moved to Wallaceburg. He traded his father's 100 acres of land for a top sail schooner.

With this he hauled cord wood from Wallaceburg to Detroit. Soon the industrious Steinhoff added shipbulding to the list of growing Wallaceburg industries. He built mainly schooners and barges. His most famous steamer "Dominion" was launched at Wallaceburg on July 12th, 1867. It was a combination freight-passenger steamer. Captain Steinhoff later turned his efforts to industrial ventures. For fifteen years he was a member of the Banking firm of Steinhoff and Lillie. He also helped to establish the Steinhoff and Hinnegan Flax Mill.

Prior to 1881, Wallaceburg had been a busy lumbering village. It was lusty, vigorous, a trifle rough, but similar to other lumbering communities. However, after this time, lumbering began to wane. Mills began to shut down, and for the second time in its history, Wallaceburg began to die.

A few years later through the efforts of some enterprising citizens, a glass factory was established. Details of this are told in a later chapter. This new industry provided new jobs which were badly needed.

Wallaceburg was again on its feet. Other industries were established and thus a firm economic foundation was made, with benefits reaching many years into the future.

## Chapter Six

# Growth of Industries

In the previous chapter, mention was made of various industries as they affected Wallaceburg's growth. Here, closer detail will be given to their establishment and operation.

The years 1850 to 1900 could be considered the "lumbering" years for Wallaceburg. During this time, it was a common sight to see log booms from upstream, clogging the Sydenham on their way to the busy mills. Even in winter, log-laden sleighs made their way to the hungry mills. The close standing forest of oak, maple and elm fed Wallaceburg's mills and others too. In fact, sailing vessels loaded with timber carried out of Wallaceburg cargoes which eventually found their way to England.

There were large mills on the East branch of the river. Their operation, and the associated operations of log cutting and shipping employed many men.

The making of staves and barrels was particularly interesting. Trees for this purpose were usually cut in lengths of eight, ten or twelve feet. At the mill, they were sawed into "Cants". A cant was a slice of eight to ten inches in width. The cants then moved on to the button saw where they were cut into lengths of thirty, twenty-four or eighteen inches. These pieces were called "bolts." The bolts were loaded on small trucks and put into steam boxes. Here they were treated with live steam for twelve or more hours. The boxes were equipped with doors on opposite sides so that when steaming was completed, unloading and re-loading could be accomplished quickly. While the bolts were still hot they were stripped of their bark and trimmed to fit the stave cutting machine, with an equalizing saw. Still hot, they were cut into staves on a tumb(er) type machine with a concave knife. This cut the staves into a double arc shape so that when placed side by side they would give the barrel its "belly" shape. Still hot, the freshly cut staves were transported to the stave yard where they were air dried for four to six weeks. After this time, the staves were jointed.

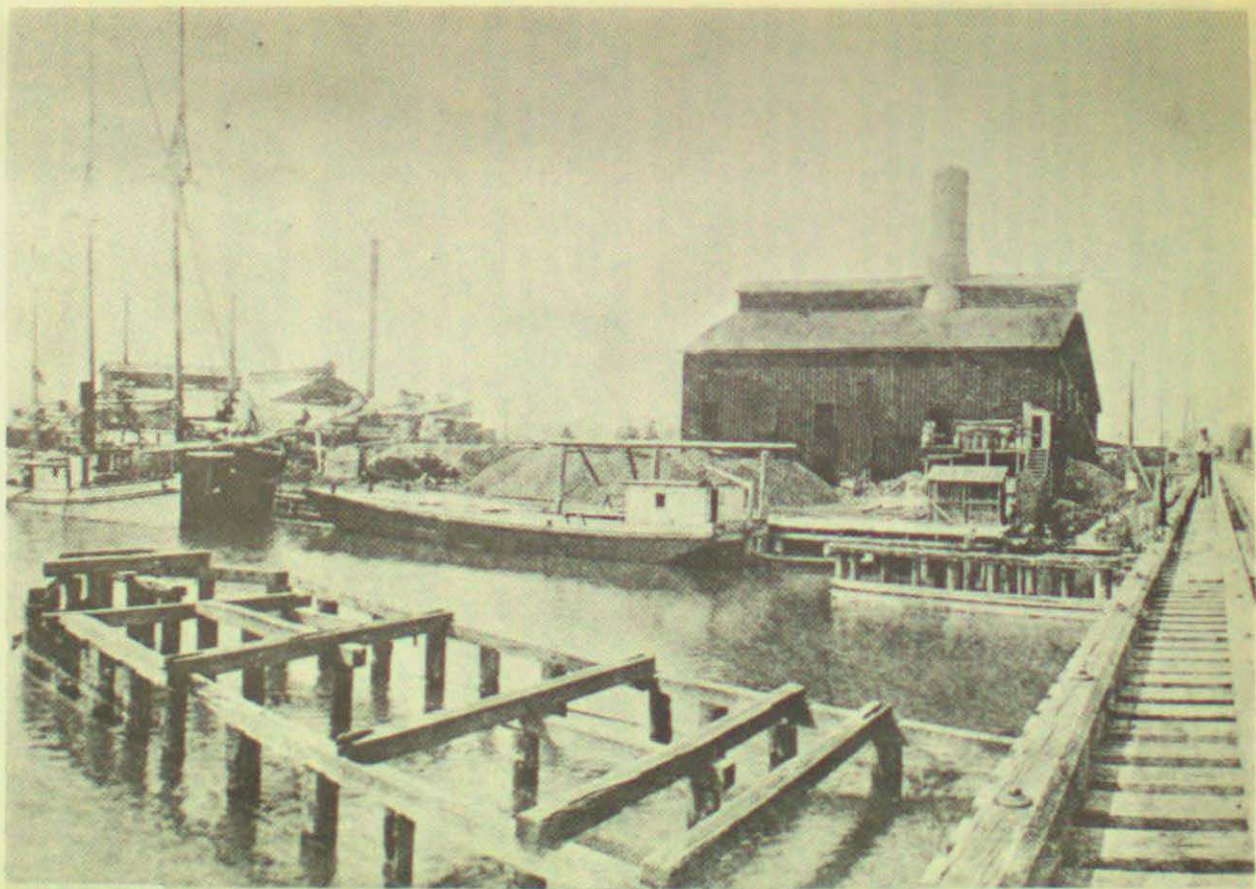
They passed over the joiner, propelled by leg power and received the exact shape necessary for the formation of a barrel. This step was referred to as "putting the bulge". Then the staves were moved to the cooper shop. Here the pieces were hand fashioned into barrels. The cooper used a chamfer knife, a crowser tool for making the groove at the barrel head, and a circular plane to smooth the ends. Hoops and headings completed the job. The entire operation of barrel making involved many hands, and therefore from the cutting of wood to the end product, many men were employed.

An account in a newspaper of November, 1847 states that "The large, three-masted steamer 'Farewell' loaded a cargo at the Steinhoff and Gordon Mill, which included three million staves and the duty alone amounted to five-hundred dollars." This illustrates the importance of an industry which has all but disappeared from North America.

### OTHER EARLY INDUSTRIES

During the eighteen-seventies and up to the early nineteen-hundreds, milling was an important industry. On the North Branch of the west bank was a large sawmill. It was operated by Mr. Harvey Morris. The plant employed approximately fifty men. On the east bank was the Grosbek Saw Mill. Near the North Branch bridge was a planing mill operated by the Wickens family. On the East Branch were two other large mills. One was the Steinhoff and Gordon Saw Mill. This was a large operation, employing more than one hundred men. Later, under the ownership of Mr. Ed Arnold, it was known as the Wallaceburg Cooperage Company. There were two other mills on the South Side. One was located on Wallace Street and the other was located near the Glass Company site.

Other industries once located on the south side were two shipyards, an Evaporator Factory, a Canning Factory (Fraser's) two Brick Yards, a Flax Mill, a Tobacco Factory, a Cigar Factory and a large Oil Refinery.



THE OLD SYDENHAM GLASS FACTORY, SHOWING FLINT HOUSE.  
(PHOTO TAKEN 1898)

THE OLD SYDENHAM GLASS FACTORY, showing Flint House, 1898.

## **THE GLASS FACTORY**

A glass experiment was probably responsible for the establishment of a Glass Factory in Wallaceburg. The experiment took place on James Street, behind the present site of Dean's Jewellery store. At that time, the store was owned by Mr. Thomas Harrison. He and a friend, Captain William Taylor were very much interested in the manufacture of glass. Local sand was used for this project. Because of its high iron content, the product was a dark colour, and not very clear. Taylor and Harrison were not satisfied with glass of this quality and further experimented with a better grade of sand which they imported from the United States. When they were satisfied with their product they entertained the thought of building a factory and making glass on a large scale operation. Perhaps a new industry would create jobs and bolster the communities' lagging economy. For such an ambitious project, however, money was needed. Perhaps the townspeople would furnish it. It was decided to hold a public meeting. Handbills advertised the event, which was well attended by the townspeople. As a result, the Sydenham Glass Company was formed. This was the predecessor of the present Dominion Glass Company.

## **SCHULTZ DIE CASTING**

The establishment in Wallaceburg of the Schultz Die Casting Factory in Wallaceburg was due to a great industrial leader. Mr. A. St. Clair Gordon received training in community-mindedness by the example of his father, Mr. D.A. Gordon. The Die Casting plant started operation with a half dozen employees, and grew in size to a large operation employing four hundred and twenty-five. The firm started in 1934 and continues here until 1959, when operations were moved to Lindsay.

It is interesting to note that Mr. Gordon was president of Schultz Die Casting Co. Sydenham Trading Co., the National Pressure Cooker of Canada, and the Gordon Manufacturing Company. Also, he was M.L.A. for West Kent, Minister without Portfolio, Chairman of the Ontario Liquor Commission and Provincial Treasurer of Ontario. Most of the above mentioned plans have since their establishment been amalgamated with larger Companies. They served as the backbone of our prosperity in this district and other parts of Ontario.

## **WALLACEBURG BRASS COMPANY**

Mr. H.W. Burgess one of our esteemed industrialists still active at the advanced age of ninety was born and spent most of his life here. To him must be given the credit for the Wallaceburg Brass, Dominion Die, Wallaceburg Singer and the Brass Casting Foundry. Also, he has worked very hard on behalf of the Sydenham District Hospital.

From a very modest beginning in the old Town Hall basement on the South Side he has built with hard and faithful work the great industries which mean so much to our present prosperity. He has truly earned the title of "Mr. Wallaceburg."

## **BENN IRON FOUNDRY**

After returning from the First World War, Mr. Alfred Benn, Sr., had an idea of starting a small factory for casting iron. Before the war, he had experience in the foundry department of one of our local industries. As a beginning, he fitted up a small building on Wallace Street east, on the bank of the river. With two other helpers, this was the beginning of Benn Iron Foundry. The business grew and soon it was necessary to expand on more than one occasion. Unfortunately, Alfred died at an early age, but his sons, Donald and Alfred, Jr., kept the expansion going. Benn Iron Foundry, now located in the West side of town, contributes much to the industrial economy of our town.

## **CANADA AND DOMINION SUGAR COMPANY**

D.A. Gordon realized the great potential of the beet sugar industry locally. Neighbouring Michigan had launched several successful processing factories and Gordon set out to organize a similar venture with what he hoped would be of equal success. Local farmers were convinced of the feasibility and were encouraged to sign up for acreage while technicians set about to formulate the processing methods.

The Wallaceburg Sugar Company was incorporated in 1900. Over the years, competition from rivals was keen but the venture thrived for several decades. It was deemed necessary to import farm workers to carry out the tedious thinning and topping process. Many of our present Dutch and Belgian families came to this area as beet workers and are responsible for the highly successful agricultural core our community enjoys today.

Later known as the Canada and Dominion Sugar Company, the venture eventually submitted to a losing battle against foreign competition. Local operations were phased off gradually with the end coming in the early sixties. However, this industry served a prominent place in the development of the Wallaceburg industrial scene.

### **H. J. HEINZ COMPANY**

A Wallaceburg branch of the H.J.Heinz Company of Canada got underway in August of 1944. Originally a seasonal operation, the plant provided employment opportunities for hundreds of the local work force, especially during the fall tomato run.

The Wallaceburg plant was intended primarily for the export market but also produced a line of products for domestic use. Eventually, the facilities passed into the hands of Libby, McNeil of Canada, Limited, the present owners.

### **HAWKEN MILLING COMPANY**

Another example of an industry that has grown with Wallaceburg is the Hawken Milling Company, known nationally for the famous "White Lily" line of milling products.

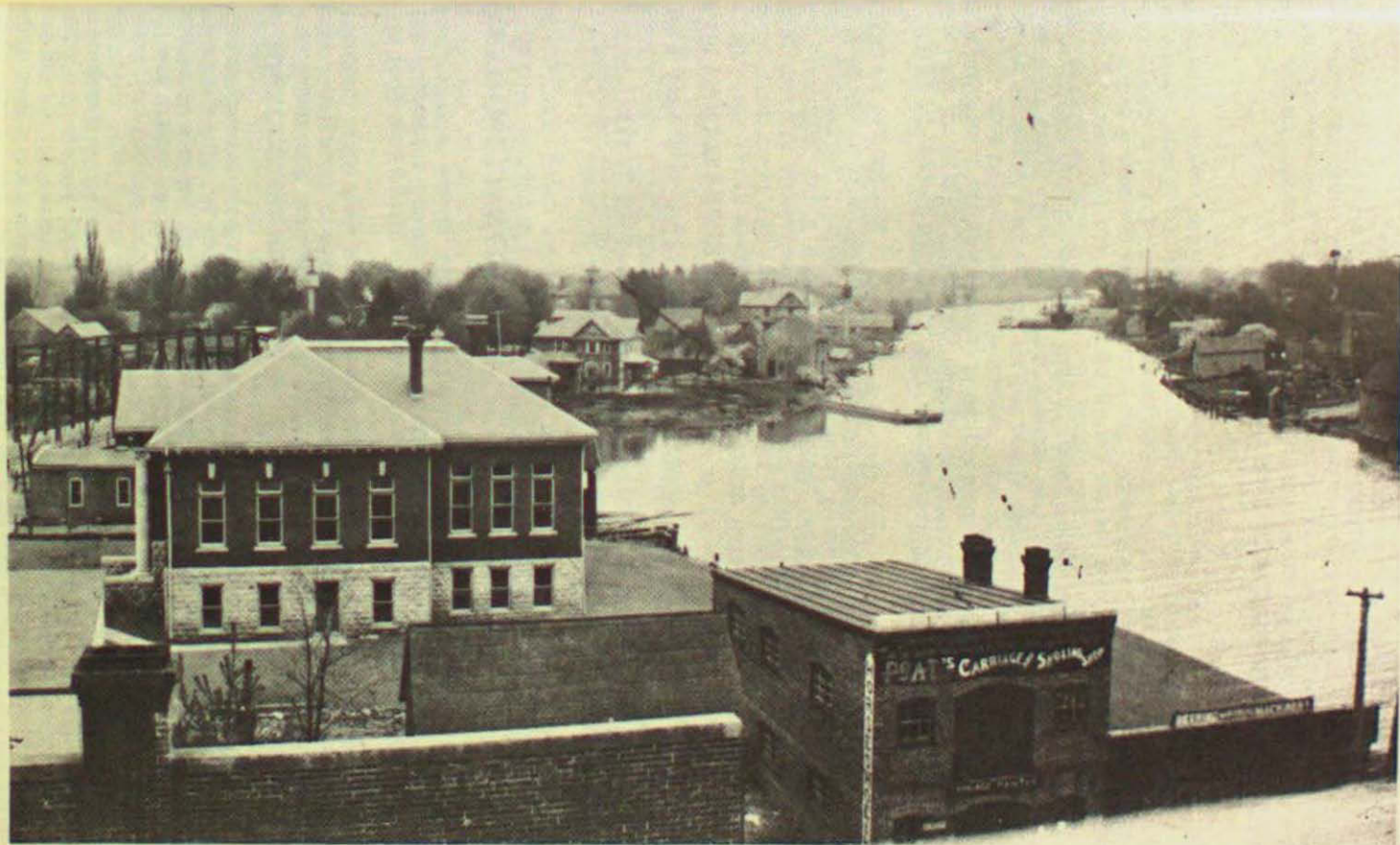
Operations began in 1907 by A.J.Hawken who eventually was succeeded by his son J. Drader Hawken, the present owner and manager and one of Wallaceburg's prominent industrialists. Pastry and bread flour and other biproduct feeds are amongst the most popular lines processed by this successful member of the Wallaceburg industrial family.

### **WALLY ENTERPRISES**

Mr. Jack Lacey along with associate Lorne Parker started from mere beginnings shortly after world war two. Operations for the production of corn cob pipes began in rented quarters above the original Patterson Motors building on James Street. Eventually launching into a varied line of products, the company was later incorporated as Wally Enterprises Limited. For a few years, operations were transferred to Dresden and upon return to Wallaceburg, the former National Pressure Cooker building on Arnold Street was utilized.

From its modest beginnings, this company can now be called big business as evidenced by its present affiliation with the famed Hillerich & Bradsby Company, one of North America's premier names in the production of sports equipment. In the local plant, the well known "Louisville Slugger" line of hockey sticks and baseball bats are produced along with a varied line of other sports equipment.

Too much credit cannot be given to men like Jack Lacey who, with such a small beginning have developed businesses to such a creditable success.



SYDENHAM RIVER, EAST BRANCH, 1906.



# Chapter Seven

## Neighbouring Communities

The neighbouring communities in the Wallaceburg environs have over the years served an integral part in the development of our town. Many of the citizens of these towns and villages look to Wallaceburg as a commercial core, an educational centre for the children, an entertainment outlet and in general an important part of day to day living.

The following section gives a brief description of the historical beginnings of these neighbouring communities that form a part of the Wallaceburg area.

### TUPPERVILLE

The pioneer name "Stockwithers' Corners" -- was changed to Tupperville through the efforts of Major O.S. Denherdt, who was granted the privilege of using Sir Charles Tupper's name for the village.

The first building was a hotel called Stockwithers' Inn. It was built on the point of land where the first concession and river road join, the township council held a meeting in this Inn October eighteen sixty-two with James Huston, Reeve and Richard Huston, Deputy Reeve. The principal business transacted was a law stating that wines and whiskey could only be sold by the quart in liquor stores in the Township. This Inn was later bought by Mr. Shaw and remodelled into the hotel which was burned years later.

The first business of importance was a stove and saw mill on the river bank and owned by Sam Sutor. When the village of Cooperville was burned John Cooper moved his mill to Tupperville which did a good business for several years.

The railroad was completed and the first train to go through Tupperville in 1885 was a work train, this being Erie and Huron.

The first church was built on the Edward Morrison homestead under the pastor of Rev. Parker who lived in Wilkesport and drove a horse and cart going to Oldfield and Dover Center churches.

George Ribble owned the first blacksmith shop and had Amos Cairns as helper who later built a shop for himself. The shop owned by Mr. Ribble was built almost across the road from the bridge. It was made of four posts in the ground and a bark roof.

The flour mill was built by a stock company, a very important business under John Grupett, first miller Mr. Herser, president of the mill. It burned and was never rebuilt. It was situated on the second street paralleled with the main street near the U.M. Station.

The first school was built on Joe Armstrong's farm and was moved in 1880 to its present site with Mr. Johnston as teacher.

John Sutor was the first store keeper in a store on the river. When the railroad went through, he sold it to Jim Davis who was the first station master and post master with store and post office in part of the station.

The bylaw for building of the bridge was passed September third, nineteen hundred and two at a cost of sixteen thousand dollars - before this, the river was crossed by a ferry. Many ask why the road going to Tupperville from the south has a bend in it, when none of the other concessions have. It has been told that this was the first road at the time Fenian Raids cut through to take the troops to the river from the Base Line.

The famous Tupperville Brass Band was one of the best known in Kent County, and was organized under the leadership of Mr. James A. Reader, in 1888, principal of School

S.S.9. Mr. Charles Ayres of Wallaceburg was the first leader and director with Mr. A. McArthur, Secretary.

## **EAST BRANCH OF THE SYDENHAM SETTLEMENTS**

The first pioneers to settle on lands granted them between Florence and Dawn Mills came around eighteen twenty. They had previously settled on the Talbot Road in Harwich but discovered that the land they occupied had already been granted to other parties. Among those who located along the stream were John and William Tiffin, Job Hall and a family named Boulton.

The locality of Dawn Mills was first settled in eighteen thirty. William Taylor and James Smith built a grist mill on the south bank of the river. Prior to this, the settlers were obligated to go to Detroit in canoes to have their grinding done. There were mills nearer on the Thames but between these streams was yet a pathless forest. Mr. Smith was for many years Warden of Kent County.

Dawn Mills was then in Dawn Township but by provision, the Municipal Act of 1850 it was changed to Camden Gore.

The Township limits of Camden were extended northward to the Sydenham and later to their present location on the Lambton County line.

## **DRESDEN**

South Dresden remained a virgin forest till about eighteen forty-six. William and Henry Van Allen laid out lots between Main Street and the river in eighteen fifty-two and William Wright laid out lots in eighteen fifty-four. Mr. Wright named the village Fairport which cognomen it continued to be known for several years. "Dresden" was bestowed on the place for postal authorities in eighteen fifty-four.

The first settlers came from Eastern Ontario, mainly from The Bay of Quinte, Hay Bay, Napanee, Amherst Island and Kingston districts. Most of these were of U.E. Loyalist descent and their names are well known today in Dresden. The names: Forshee, Watson, Wallace, Parks, Wells, Windover, McWha, Broad, McVean, McKim, Lindsay, and many more not here recorded.

The principal business consisted in shipping of square timber, staves and cordwood. Vessels of three hundred tons could load at their dock. Several fine craft were built the Watson, Hiawatha, City of Dresden and the Enterprise.

Several hundred acres lying south of Main Street and west of St. George were purchased by the Corporation called the British, American Institute. It was here the coloured refugees from American slavery lived. Today these people are very fine people and a credit to any community.

In eighteen sixty-two Dresden had one grist mill, two saw mills, four stores and population was about three hundred and fifty. No bridges crossed the river till eighteen sixty-four - all traffic previous to this had to be ferried across.

In 1870, a weekly newspaper was published by Alex Riggs, called the "Gazette." He later sold to McClellan and McSween and Struthers were the next to own the paper. T.R. Stubbs was the next owner; Nicholas Wells was the next owner then, later his son Thomas and grandson Lawrence Wells.

A volunteer fire company was formed in eighteen eighty-two with William Waterworth as foreman and C.W. Wees as engineer. Alexander Trelice was Dresden's first Mayor.

## **PORT LAMBTON**

The small St. Clair River village of Port Lambton has always been considered as part of the Wallaceburg community. Many Wallaceburg residents have summer homes at Port Lambton and the area is a mecca for boating and swimming enthusiasts as well as the "best place" to view the steamers from around the world.

Settlement in Port Lambton was started in 1820 by Duncan McDonald who erected the first frame home in the township. In the mid 1800's Port Lambton thrived on the lumbering trade as there were at one time two saw mills in addition to several related mill operations. The riverfront was dotted with docks and wharfs. Commercially, the village boasted several fine hotels, many stores, three liverys, two telegraph offices, a regular postal service in addition to daily rail service.

Port Lambton served as a stop off point for several of St Clair River excursions steamers. The White Star steamers City of Toledo, Tashmoo, and Greyhound, Owana and Wauketa made regular stops at Port Lambton on their run to Lake Huron.

Baby Point to the south of Port Lambton was also a thriving community with both of these settlements serving as a vital link to the Wallaceburg community.

## **SOMBRA**

Sombra village, over the years has had a vital link to Wallaceburg as many of the village residents have found employment in local industry, in addition to being a commercial centre. Sombra residents receive their secondary school education in Wallaceburg as well as having a firm link with the Wallaceburg athletic scene by providing several key players over the years.

According to 1880 records, Sombra boasted a branch Customs House, a telegraph office, a school with two teachers, four churches-Anglican, Roman Catholic and two Methodist, a steam grist mill, docks, two general stores, a grocery and several smaller shops. In 1821, Abraham Smith and Samuel Burnham located in Sombra and found that two French families, Beauchamp and Matavie had already located there.

Being a marine village, Sombra has produced over the years many lake freighter captains, mates, engineers and shipboard personnel. A steady line of salutes from passing vessels was a means of acknowledging the brief sighting of "hometown."

## **WILKESPORT**

At one time, in the mid eighteen hundreds, Wilkesport was the head of navigation on the north branch of the Sydenham River. As road travel was at a minimum in pioneer days, water travel provided a more convenient access in and out of the area.

The lumber industry made Wilkesport a thriving community for several years. Since the surrounding area teemed with vast numbers of trees, the booming of the lumber industry was inevitable. The village boasted several hotels, stores and taverns over the years. Lumber jacks and mill hands made the village their centre of operations.

Shipbuilding thrived for many years at Wilkesport as scows, rafts and other vessels were required for the lumbering trade. Large schooners were often unable to negotiate the north branch of the Sydenham and were often towed by tug, sometimes stern first.

Eventually the lumber industry waned and Wilkesport with it, as navigation was reduced to a trickle. Most of the choice timber was cleared, but Wilkesport served as a vital link with the Wallaceburg community.

## Chapter Eight

# Way of Life in Wallaceburg (late 1800's early 1900's)

My own business is located on the same site as my father's livery business. I have lived here all my life, and my father before me lived here since the early 1870's. Our continued businesses on the same site has afforded me the opportunity of meeting people of several generations. From listening to their conversations in which they mention experiences of their own ancestors, I have heard stories covering a wide span of years. From these stories, I would like to present a picture of life in the early days.

There were very few of the early people who could be called rich. Working hours were long by our standards. The mills started operation at 7:00 A.M., and continued until 6:00 P.M. Wages were about 90 cents to \$1.25 per day. The social life was limited. Visiting was popular. Church events flourished, and house parties and house dances were common. Children and young people had little money to spend. There were no fancy toys for most children. They were forced to use their ingenuity to find playthings. Among the greatest thrills in the life of a child was the Annual Sunday School Excursion on one of the many passenger boats. Most frequent destinations were Belle Isle, Walpole Island. If you had fifteen cents you could have a good time. If you had 25 cents you were considered wealthy because you could spend five cents for a dish of ice cream on the boat going, fifteen cents at Belle Isle, and five cents coming home. Lunch was taken in a shoe box or basket. The whole family ate together.

The favourite game for boys was marbles. Girls enjoyed skipping. If one owned a ball, he had many friends as it took a great deal of saving to buy the ball. From this simple childhood many leaders and solid citizens emerged. Apparently, the strict rule and hard work had a good effect.

The early educational system by today's standard was very limited. There was a small South Side School where the D.A. Gordon School now stands. A second school stood on the present site of the W.T. Laing Senior Public School. Both original buildings were destroyed by fire.

Most boys went to work at the age of fourteen to sixteen. Their wages were needed to supplement the family income, which averaged from \$8.00 to \$12.00 per week.

Formal entertainment was to be found in the second floor auditorium of the Municipal Building. The building was located on the South Side on the present site of the Hydro building. The auditorium was busy with school concerts, Church Christmas concerts and as a very special treat, the appearance of a travelling stock company. Groups such as the Guy Brothers and the Marks Brothers put in an occasional appearance also. Of special interest was the Movie House. It was open daily at its James Street location, and its flickering presentation, supplemented by vaudeville acts could be enjoyed for ten or fifteen cents.

Much activity centered around the churches. The preachers presented a stern message and they were very influential in the lives of their parishioners. Strict observance of the Sabbath was the rule for most, requiring for children attendance at Sunday School Morning Service and Evening Service. Prayer meeting was held by most churches on Wednesday. Church suppers and concerts were largely and enthusiastically attended.

From listening to stories of this time it seems that the practical joke was employed often. Particular enjoyment for the joker was had in the telling of it afterward.

One of the early bankers, who lived on Margaret Avenue, was walking to work one



DUNCAN AND JAMES STREET INTERSECTION 1880's

day. While passing MacKenzie's bake shop, he took a small piece of stove wood from the wood pile. As he passed the bridge-swingers' small house, he smashed a hole in the window. Once over the bridge he met the bridge swinger. "Too bad that someone smashed your window," said the banker. The bridge man was startled. He hadn't noticed the vandalism when he left home. "When you find the culprit, make him pay dearly" said the banker. It was at this point that he "casually" mentioned that two of the town's prominent and proper business men had been out on a binge the night before. With clever words, the banker incriminated a nearby dry-goods merchant. Into the dry-goods store went the angry bridge swinger and promptly accused the man of breaking his window. In an effort to avoid any scandal, the merchant went for his cash drawer and produced \$1.50. A few hours later, the banker, very dignified, mentioned to the dry-goods merchant that he shouldn't go around breaking windows when he was out at night. Both had a good laugh.

A prominent lawyer of the time was standing in front of his Duncan Street office contemplating the weather. Along came a local character, very adept at sign painting. The lawyer was persuaded that his bare window needed a painted sign. "I will do the job tonight, and it will be dry and ready for tomorrow" said the painter.

Next morning, the lawyer approached his office, quite eager to see the new paint job. To his horror, he saw, painted boldly on his window, the picture of a boy with the seat of his pants in rags. The boy was standing calmly behind a plow and the inscription "J.S.F., Barrister" proclaimed the business being carried on inside.

A prominent early industrialist was having trouble with a thief. Wood was disappearing from a pile on his mill lot. An employee of the mill was suspected. Cleverly he set out to trap the culprit. He went to the suspect and asked his help in trapping the wood thief. "We shall drill out a piece of wood and fill it with gun powder. Then we shall place it here at this end of the pile so that the thief will be sure to pick it up." Early that night, the mill owner switched the powdered wood to the opposite end of the pile and his prime suspect had the unfortunate experience of an exploding wood stove.

Thus was the life of years ago. One learned mostly by doing and received most of his education in the "School of Hard Knocks". Yet most survived, and many, tempered by a tough, rugged upbringing, became very worthwhile citizens.



NELSON STREET looking north from James Street

# Chapter Nine

## Development of Local Government and Institutions

### CHURCHES

When considering the origin of our early settlers, one would probably think of the as following the Scottish Presbyterian faith. But, this was not so. The earliest settlers were ministered to by a circuit preacher; a Wesleyan Methodist from the settlement on the Thames. Through the influence of the "saddle-back preachers" a mission was established near Baldoon, about 1812. The first log meeting place was located on the Snye close to the Stewart farm.

The first church in Wallaceburg was started in 1842. Services were held in a log building on north Nelson Street. It also served as a combination school and municipal building. A more permanent building was built on LaFontaine Street. Members of the Episcopal faith joined the members of this congregation, and the church was named the United Methodist Wesleyan Church. The next Methodist church was built on the corner of Nelson and Wall Street. This building lasted until 1914 when the new Methodist Church (now Trinity United) was built on the corner of Wellington and Creek Streets.

With the settlement of Dover Township by many farmers from the Eastern Townships of Quebec, the Roman Catholic establishment came to this district. Spiritual needs of early Roman Catholics were maintained by missionaries of the Jesuit Order. They set up altars in private homes, heard confessions and administered the tenets of their faith. The first meeting place in Wallaceburg was on the south side. Next came a wooden building, a combination Church and school, located on the corner of Duncan and Elgin Streets. The present Church, Our Lady of Help, was built in 1874. It was at that time and still is one of the most imposing buildings of the town. Our present population is about forty percent Roman Catholic.

People of the Presbyterian faith formed a congregation about 1867 and built a small church on James Street. Land was donated by the Andrew McKay family. Later a church was built at the corner of Duncan and Elizabeth. This building burned about 1900 and the present church was then built. Since the time of its erection, additions have been added to make it about twice its original size.

Anglicans at first used the old Methodist 1870 Church on LaFontaine Street. It was used by them until about 1892 when it was destroyed by fire. After that, temporary services were held in a building on James Street. The present church building was erected in 1895, and since that time, it has been enlarged greatly.

The first Baptist Church was built in 1866, on Nelson Street, opposite the old Methodist Church. In 1903 the present church was opened, and since that time it has been enlarged to the point where now the building is inadequate for the size of congregation.

The Salvation Army, at first, occupied the Old Episcopal Church which stood on the corner of William and Wellington Streets. When this building burned, a Citadel was built on Queen Street. This building also was destroyed by fire and the congregation met for some time in homes and various other locations. Their present Citadel is located on Gillard Street.

It appears that the early settlers took their Churches very seriously. They were dependent on them in the trying and troublesome times, and received comfort, friendship and stability for the life struggles they had to endure in their job of Community building.





THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH 1866 on southeast corner of Nelson and Wall

## **LIBRARY**

The first semblance of a library was a reading room located in the Kerten block, on the corner of Duncan and James Street. It was organized by the Mechanics Institute which set up similar rooms in other communities.

When it was decided in 1904 to build a fire hall, a library room was also planned. This ground floor room on the corner of Duncan and Wellington was managed by Mr. Edwin Johnston, descendant of a Selkirk settler. The library was no doubt an asset to early cultural development.

In 1906 Mr. Norman Gurd suggested that a grant could be obtained from Mr. Andrew Carnegie for the building of a permanent library. On April 19th of that year, the Council appointed a committee to investigate this proposal. The committee was composed of Messrs. Mann, Quennell and Saint. It was reported by these men that a location was found for the building on Lots 1 and 2, the present site. Lot #1 was purchased by Mr. C.J. Johnston for \$700 and lot #2 was purchased from Mr. N.E. McDonald for \$650. Next was the problem of deciding the type of building needed and a method for financing the building. It was decided that Mr. Carnegie would be asked for a grant of \$7,500. After this request was made, the Mayor, Library board and Council anxiously awaited a reply. As it turned out, Mr. Carnegie wanted an explanation. It had been reported to him that on July 13, 1901 Town Council had procured \$5,000 for the purpose of building a small library, and that he would be requested for a grant of \$2,000. This \$5,000 was for the erection of the Fire Hall which contained a reading room. To clear-up any confusion, the situation was explained, and a copy of the bylaw for the building of the Fire Hall was sent to Carnegie. Meanwhile, Council acted on a resolution by Messrs. Gibb and Mann for the purchase of land and the establishment of a free library. On March 26th, 1906, the Council was granted \$7,500 by Mr. Carnegie.

The library became a reality through the munificence of Mr. Carnegie and through the industry and foresight of the Council. It was a happy day when the cornerstone was laid. This job was done by Dr. Mitchell. The original building was completed in 1906.

The next important step in the history of the library is more familiar to us. The Centennial addition and renovation was completed in 1967. It was officially opened by the Honorable Judy LaMarsh, Secretary of State, and Federal Minister in charge of Centennial Affairs.

It is hoped that the new addition will fulfill the needs of the present and future generations.

Perhaps they will reflect on the foresight and courage of our generation in providing them the opportunity of developing their knowledge and culture through the use of this institution.

## **GOVERNMENT**

Formal local government began in 1875, on January first, when Wallaceburg was incorporated as a Village. The first Reeve was Alexander McDougall, and the council was composed of John Lillie, Joseph Beatty, Dr. B. Newman and Dr. George Mitchell. Clerk was D.B. McDonald and James Scott was Treasurer. First order of business was the erection of a suitable municipal building. As a result, the Town Hall was built the following year in 1876. It was located on the present site of the Hydro building.

The year 1896 saw the incorporation of Wallaceburg into a town. The first mayor was J. W. Steinhoff. Reeve was Charles Chubb and Deputy Reeve was J. Shaw. The Clerk was D.B. McDonald. J. Scott was Treasurer. The council had four members. With a population of 2,135 the new town covered an area of roughly one square mile. Formal government gave the community strength, and soon new bylaws changed the way of life. Wooden sidewalks were replaced. Standard hours were set for closing hotel bars. Other bylaws had such names as Police Commission, Fence Viewers and Curfews. At the beginning, interest in Municipal elections was very keen and very capable men headed

the Town. They promoted industry and gave the town a firm foundation in the important early years. It was under the mayorship of Chas. Sauvey that work was started on paving the streets. The project was continued during the terms of office of T.B.Dundas, Dr. Campbell, Harry Martin and William Clifford. In 1914, when T.B.Dundas was mayor the waterworks was installed.

A list of the Mayors from 1896 to the present are as follows: 1896 Capt. J.W.Steinhoff, 1897 - Charles Chubb; 1898-99 and 1900 - D.A.Gordon; 1901 - Charles Chubb; 1902 - W.H.Heath; 1903 and 1904 - T.B.Dundas; 1905 - T.F.Hinnegan; 1906 and 1907 - H.A.Stonehouse; 1908 - J.C.Shaw; 1909 and 1910 - W.J.McDonald; 1911 and 1912 - Chas Sauvey; 1913 to 1915 - T.B.Dundas; 1916 and 1917 - Dr. A.G.Campbell; 1918 to 1920 - Harry Martin; 1921 and 1922 - William Clifford; 1923 - 1924 - Dr. S. Richardson.

In 1925 Frank Hinnegan was mayor. He was followed by Dr. Richardson in 1926; A. St. Clair Gordon in 1927 - 28; C.S.Stonehouse in 1929 - 30 and J.T.Saint from 1931 to 1933. The mayors following were 1934 - Dr. Richardson; 1935 to 1938 - E.U.Dickenson; 1939 to 1942 - A.P.Brander; 1943 - A. Gilhuly; 1944 - Eric McDonald 1945 - 1946, J.A. Lillie.

1947 - 48 Eric McDonald; 1949 - 50 William Glendinning. Mr. Glendinning died while in office and his unfinished term was served by Eric McDonald. Mr. W.J.Picard served in 1951 and from 1952 to 1956 W.J.Collins was the mayor. J.L. Thompson was mayor during 1957 and 1958 and from 1959 to 1961 Robert Newberry served as chief executive and in 1962 Mr. George Clement, A.B.Cousins served from 1963 to 1965 and in 1966 Nigel Savage was elected to office.

These are the men who through their energy and business ability have guided the Town through its many different phases. Often the reward for such effort is constant criticism by citizens and ratepayers.

Special note should be made to some former mayors:

- |                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| Captain Steinhoff | - Farmer, boat builder and owner; early business promoter and donor of Steinhoff Park land, Anglican Church site, War Memorial monument.  |
| Charles Chubb     | - came here early in his life<br>- was in Insurance business<br>- entered into civil development and spent his whole life here in the interest of the Town.   |
| D.A.Gordon        | - an outstanding industrialist of Canada<br>- a member of Dominion Parliament<br>- father of Jeanie Gordon, Metropolitan Opera Star<br>- instrumental in having Running Creek dredged<br>- established Sugar and Glass Factories<br>- established Flax Mill, Lumber Mills<br>- President of C.W. & L.E. railway |
| W.H.Heath         | - furniture manufacturer<br>- spent most of his life here in business   |
| T.B.Dundas        | - came as principal of one of our early schools<br>- was mayor when waterworks was installed<br>- churchman<br>- general manager of Glass Company   |



FIRE HALL AND COUNCIL CHAMBERS corner of Wellington and Duncan

A. St. Clair Gordon

- son of D.A.Gordon
- provincial treasurer when MPP
- president of Wallaceburg Cut-Glass Company
- president of Schultz Die Casting Company
- president of National Pressure Cooker Company

In more recent times, William Glendinning, Eric McDonald, Alan Brander, Ashton Lillie, Wilfred Picard, Bob Newberry, George Clement and Alan Cousins gave their talents and abilities. Being younger men, they ventured out into more daring projects.

At present, we are honoured by the first Woman Councillor and Reeve, Cecile Bechard, who has been very effective as an elected municipal official.

Our present Mayor, Nigel Savage, deserves much credit for what he has accomplished. He took office at a time when the town was expanding commercially. Many services were required and this necessitated higher taxes. This expansion breeds new problems which are not readily solved. One of the problems is criticism from the ratepayers.

All statistics point to Wallaceburg becoming a city in the near future. We have the locations, the facilities, the brains and the people to make this town an even better place to live.



## Chapter Ten

# Transportation and Lodging

Before the days of the automobile, and efficient public transportation, two businesses played an important part in the life of Wallaceburg. These were Hotels and Livery Stables.

If you travelled from place to place, horses were used. Quite often they were hired from the livery stable. Since horses were slow compared to modern vehicles, accommodation was needed in every community.

Our town had many hotels. These were rated good and bad according to the service and accommodation offered. The first hotel in Wallaceburg, built by the McDougalls, was on the corner of Wallace and Murray Streets. It flourished in the 1830's, and was framed from the timber that stood on its site. According to one story, two brothers, known for their fighting ability, used to ride their horses through the front door, receive their drink of whiskey from the bar, and exit, still on horseback.

Across the street and a few doors west was the Montreal House. Part of it still remains as the Kent House. Originally the building had three storeys.

On the present site of Cameron Motors was the Arlington Hotel. It was a large, four-storey building, and a first class establishment. It was run for many years by the O'Mara Brothers. Here a good meal could be purchased for 25 cents.

On the present site of the Wallaceburg Hotel was the Arthur House. It was a three-storey building. It was said that a world champion boxer once stayed there. Local boys, anxious to discover how good he was, challenged him to a free-for-all. They cleaned his clock rather neatly, and ended up in a real good drinking party. The hotel after many years of business burned, and the Wallaceburg Hotel was built in its place.

On the North Side of town were two very dignified Hotels. They were the Queens and the Riverhouse. The Queens was part of the Beattie Block. It had four floors and was of brick, occupying the northwest corner of Nelson and James Streets. On its completion 1888, it was considered one of the Town's finest buildings. Nine years later, in 1897, it was consumed in a spectacular fire. Two lives were lost.

The Riverhouse was a large three-storey hotel of frame construction. It was located on the northeast corner of Nelson and Wellington Streets. The best known owner was Mr. George Hill. His porter, the town's only colored man was well known as "Bill". This hotel too fell fate to a fire, in 1904.

Two other hotels provided lodging. The Windsor was located on Margaret Avenue. The North American was on James Street, on the southeast corner of Creek. Originally there was a frame building on the site. In the 1920's the original wooden building was moved towards the river, and a new building was erected. A three storey brick building, it was named the Empire Hotel. However, hopes for a profitable business were dashed when a bylaw was passed, ordering the closing of all hotel bars. In later years, the ground floor was occupied by Hazzard's Meat Market, and the upper floors were converted for use as apartments.

All the hotels were busy in their heyday. It was in these establishments that many men of the town spent their spare time. Whiskey cost about fifty cents a quart, and was 90 proof. Many famous fights and arguments took place. The Hotel bar was strictly a man's domain and many important business deals were settled here.

### LIVERY

There were fine livery stables operating in the early days. Here, equipment was offered for use at weddings, funerals and by the travelling public. Livery stables usually operated twenty-four hours a day.

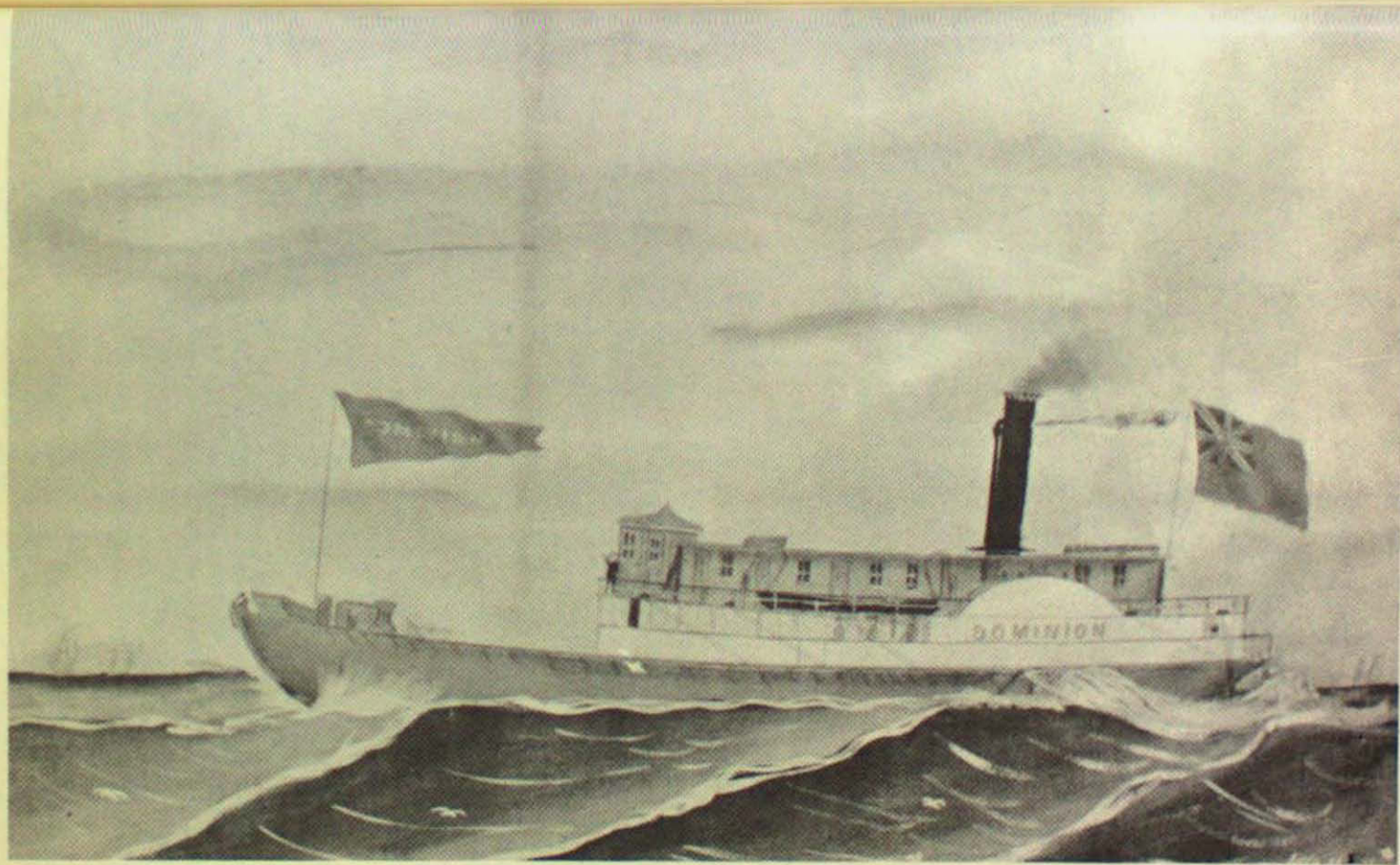


ARLINGTON HOTEL on Wallace Street



If you wanted to have an outing on Sunday, you spoke for a horse and buggy. The Sunday cost was \$2.50, but the weekday fee was only \$2.00. For weddings, one hired a driven Hack. For a funeral, a wagonette, two Hacks, and pallbearers were needed. The cost was usually \$10.00.

The liveryman usually bought and sold horses. His establishment usually served as a meeting place for men. Here one could hear the latest news and gossip, and could talk about his wife and receive sympathetic nods from other "hard-pressed" and "over-worked" husbands. As well as stocking from fifteen to twenty horses, the liveryman usually provided the allied services of blacksmithing, harness repairing, carriage painting, and feed raising. My father, Samuel Mann, ran such a livery for over forty years. It was from the patrons of the livery stable that I learned many of the stories of Wallaceburg's past.



THE DOMINION taken from a painting

# Chapter Eleven

## Boats and Navigation

The time in our history which is very exciting was the time in which many steam boats plied our rivers. They were busily engaged in transporting timber to the hungry mills downstream and abroad.

Wilkesport was the head of navigation on the Sydenham. There were no bridges to impede progress, and river depth of twelve to fifteen feet allowed easy passage. Many can well remember standing on the river bank watching the long rafts of logs being towed to the mills, or seeing wood scows loaded to the gunwale with high-piled timber. It would seem unbelievable to people today that sailing vessels loaded timber at Wilkesport and sailed to England. Many a white oak timber from Wilkesport found its way to an English coal mine, or to an English shipyard.

Getting vessels upstream and loading them sometimes proved to be difficult. Sometimes the ships were pulled by oxen, following paths on the riverbanks. Sometimes sailors would carry the ship's anchor ahead, cast it into the water, and the big ship would pull itself by the capstan or winch. The steep river bends often necessitated the swinging of the crossbeams to avoid being caught by the trees along the edge. When loading a boat with timber, it was often necessary to open the seacocks to lower the boat so that the deck would be even with the riverbank. The stern gates would be opened, timber pulled aboard, and the ship subsequently pumped to restore it to a safe sailing balance.

In Wallaceburg it was evident to some that there was a local need for the building of ships. Local lumber could be shipped to distant markets. In the nearby community of Detroit, there was a need for cordwood for heating. As a result, in the 1850's a few enterprising men started a ship yard for the making of wooden scows. Having little cash, but plenty of native ability they went to the woods and gathered large limbs and roots which had natural crooks. These strong, white oak pieces made excellent ship ribs with a bit of shaping.

Straight oak was cut for ship planking. Straight grained oak made excellent keels. With very little expense, it was possible to combine these pieces into excellent wood scows that lasted for years.

The resulting scows had flat decks, spoon bows and flat bottoms. The rudders were large wooden heavy timbers which were operated by tillers on tops of the small wooden cabins. The scows were equipped with a mast and were often sailed across Lake St. Clair. They were loaded and unloaded by wheel barrows. One could usually find a keg of beer on board. Chained to it was a tin cup. This was an incentive to those standing on the dock, and they were usually offered a cup of beer for each load they wheeled on board. A few successful trips to Detroit would pay for the cost of building a scow.

Through the wood scow venture, many successful captains and financiers got their start.

In the old days, boats seemed to assume personalities. Their individual characteristics---whistles, exhaust sounds, engine noises, made them easily recognizable even when out of sight. Most people were acquainted with the various characteristics of many boats. when you heard four blasts, you knew Captain Kelly in the "Rooney" was coming past the North Branch bridge. Another blast would tell that the "Energy" was back in town. Perhaps you would run to the bank and wave. "Did you have a good trip, Carl?" "See you at the dock."

Five whistles was the signal to open the railroad bridge. Four was meant for the North Branch Bridge, and three was the Central Bridge signal. The Sydenham was con-



THE COLLOP loading timber from Wilkesport

stantly turbulent with the coming and going of the steamers. All the children knew that the biggest waves were made by the passenger boats. At one time we had daily passenger boats from Dresden to Wallaceburg, and then on to Sarnia. The "Hiawatha", "City of Dresden", "Byron Terrice", "Ossifrige", "City of Chatham" and others docked at Wallaceburg almost daily. The passenger boats were busy for many years simply because they provided a direct, cheap and comfortable means of transportation to nearby communities.

These river queens bustled along until they were rivalled in the twenties and early thirties by the popularity of the automobile. One of the last of such ships landing at Wallaceburg, was the "Omar D. Conger". Capable of carrying five hundred passengers, she made two trips per week to Sarnia. Her career ended at Port Huron when she was destroyed by a boiler explosion in 1938. Another popular boat was the "Rapids King." This large ship and her sister-ship, the "Thousand Islander," ran for several seasons between Wallaceburg and Detroit. The "King" ended her days when she flo-  
 undered in a Lake Huron gale.

Passenger boats are now extinct on the Great Lakes. They have served their place in history, but their romance and adventure still lives in the hearts of many.

## WALLACEBURG SHIP OWNERS AND OPERATORS

Many boats were owned and operated out of Wallaceburg. Some were built or rebuilt here. Important in the ship-repair business was the Lee Brothers Machine Shop. This business specialized in repairing engines and machinery. Park Brothers and McKeoughs from Chatham manufactured and repaired ship's boilers.

Following is a list of ships that played an important part in the life and development of Wallaceburg:

Jean Fraser	-Rose Burgess	Annetee Fraser
Claude Mitchell	Wm. Wallace	W.S.Ireland
Hiawatha	Dodger	Active
Enterprise	Dauntless	J.B. Newman
Harry Sewell	Uncle Jim	Arbutus
Relief	Minnie	S & J Collier
Belnap	Jenny Lind	Emma
Eddy	Gondole	Spray
Champion	Dolly Marden	Frankie
Allan Bully	Byron Terrice	Effort
Messenger	Beatrice	Colorado
Kent	Annie Collina	Eligia Windsor
T. L. Morley	Raven	John Lee Sr.
St. Joseph	New Dominion	George W. Parker
Ella Burrows	Energy	Uno
T. Fetter	A. T. Kelly	R. C. Brittain
R. F. Child	Grace Darling	Louisa
Wm. K. McCrae	United Lumberman	John T. Nott
Myrtle	Ariadnice	E. J. McVea
E.G. Ashley	Maud	D.A. Gordon
Nellie	H. Harey	Canada
Lyman Casey	William Rooney	Comfort



LOG JAM IN THE SYDENHAM 1882

# Chapter Twelve

## Floods and Fires

In the Spring of 1967 Wallaceburg suffered disaster because of the flooding of the Sydenham River and Running Creek. However, this situation is not a new one.

In reviewing the papers sent to Lord Selkirk's land agent, it was mentioned by McDonell that Bear Creek (Sydenham) had flooded, and caused the Baldoon river (Snye) to turn a dark muddy colour. This is one of the earliest mentions of flooding in this district.

Another early flood that caused much concern was in June 1892. Because of the flourishing lumber industry, freshly cut logs were piled on the banks, awaiting "rafting" downstream. A close series of rainstorms caused the river to rise, and it was not long until the cut logs were floating. This in turn developed into a log jam of tremendous proportion. The river "backed-up" to such an extent that crops were ruined, and many cattle were drowned.

A very serious flood occurred in 1905. Farmlands near the river were covered with water to a depth of eight to ten feet. Many residents were forced to evacuate their homes in Wallaceburg.

The year 1927 saw much damage and high water from the river. Water level was more than eighteen feet above normal.

Within the memory of many is the flood of 1947. Former farmlands had been built-up with houses, and this flood affected more homes than ever before. This was, also, the case in the flood of 1968, in which many new homes on the fringe of the town were flooded.

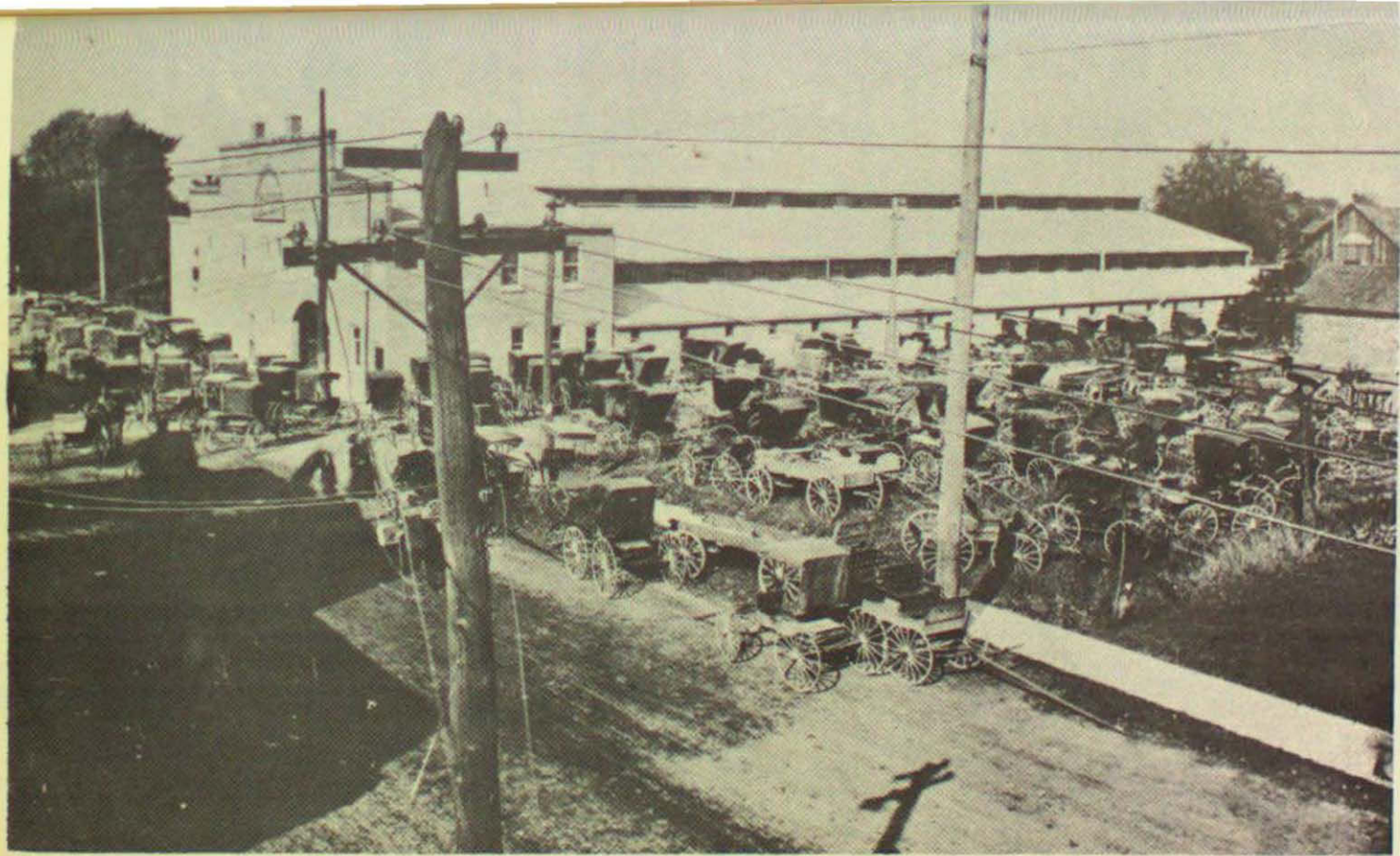
Damage in the most recent flood is estimated at close to one million dollars. Present preventative plans call for dredging and damming of the river at various intervals.

### FIRES

Prior to the 1880's all buildings in Wallaceburg were constructed of wood. They were heated by wood stoves which were often times unsafe. As a result, building-fires were very common and very serious. In the early days, fire protection and prevention of the fire spreading, consisted of the "bucket brigade" method. As the community grew, a better method was needed. In the 1850's, a fire hall was built. It was located near the river on Duncan Street, close to the Centre Bridge. The building housed a pumper, powered by six men. By this means, water was forced through a leather hose. However, adequate fire protection was far from obtained. In case of fire, it was necessary for the unfortunate victim to run down the street in the direction of the Fire Hall, and to yell "Fire", as loud as possible. Once at the fire hall, it was necessary to ring the fire bell to arouse the town. Those aroused, and owners of horses would race with the animals to the Fire Hall, hitch onto the new steam pumper (1880) and drag it to the river. While the pumper was being stoked by some, others would lay hose to the site of the burning building. Still others would attempt to save belongings from the burning buildings. Later, horses were kept at the fire-hall. Harnesses were hung in such a position that they could be quickly attached to the horses. Wood was laid under the boiler at the engine, which could be made operational in six to ten minutes. An automatic device kept the bell ringing in order to arouse helpers.

In later years the frequency of fires decreased. This was due to better fire-fighting equipment, and also to the more fireproof building methods that were used.

Fires in the early days were a matter of grave concern. Nearly everyone pitched-in to help, but in spite of all the effort, most of the burning buildings burned to the ground. Some of the larger fires consumed mills, the Beatty Block of four storeys, the Arthur House, the Arlington Hotel, the Glass Factory and Cramer's public barn on Nelson Street.



THE CRAMER BARN Nelson Street to Lafontaine Street





THE BEATTIE BLOCK Nelson and James Street

# The Beattie Block Fire

Composed and Written in the J.W.Steinhoff home by Mrs. John Annal.

It was the twelfth of January,  
Eighteen and ninety seven,  
About the hour of midnight  
The alarm of fire was given.

Oh! awake and see the fire,  
The great king disturbs our town.  
Ah! the flames are mounting higher,  
The Beattie Block is burning down.

And soon brave hearted men were there,  
Doing all within their power;  
Excited women and children everywhere,  
At that dreadful midnight hour.

To the spectators of the flames  
It was a terrible sight to behold.  
The anguish of the escaping ones  
Will never be fully told.

The serious losers by the flames  
Were T.F. Hinnegan of the Queens Hotel,  
E. Stevens kept the restaurant;  
The poolroom, John Martell.

And still the flames roll on,  
In vain they try to stop.  
T. O'Donnell's grocery, too is gone,  
And F. Smith's jewelry shop.

Ah! yes, they spread about,  
Like evil from door to door,  
Entirely wiping out  
C.A. Hardeman's shoe store.

Lodge rooms, Ballroom, and dwellings,  
All came tumbling down;  
Alas, the whole main building  
Of our enterprising town.

But the worst of all is yet to come;  
Two men did lose their lives  
Both leaving little children  
Both leaving weeping wives.

Albert Ugle was the one  
Whose remains were carried home  
When he came here he little thought,  
Poor man, he would meet such a dreadful doom.

Andrew Bard, the other man,  
Whose remains were never found,  
The ruins, alas, a new block is now  
His monument, while ashes form his mound.

Their families have the sympathy  
Of our Wallaceburg business men.  
The deceased were employees of  
The Glass Works Sydenham.

Think of the fatherless children  
Think of the wives' despair.  
Think in pity, each citizen,  
And remember them in your prayer.

These verses may not bear great light  
In the poetical world but on the  
Subject on which they are written  
May not to the wall be hurled.

## Sad Memories

Can it be that I am dreaming  
As I stand in the open door,  
That those lights once brightly beaming,  
Have gone out forevermore.

Ah! those lights so brightly shining,  
I have watched for many an hour,  
Watched them lighting and declining,  
As I sit in my favourite bower.

Other lights may shine as brightly,  
Other walls may take their place  
But sad memories cling so tightly  
Naught can sever or deface.

Composed and Written in the home  
of J.W. Steinhoff.

by Mrs. John Annal.



THE FIRST ELECTRIC CAR FROM CHATHAM 1904 Left to right: Ches McGregor, Herbert W. Burgess, P. T. Barry, Joseph Shaw, Hugh Stonehouse, Mr. McKenzie, Albert Harrison, John Anderson, Robert Riddell, J. H. Fraser, James

Quinnel, Dr. Knight, Capt. J. W. Steinhoff, Alex Bourne, Harry Mitchell, Bernard Mohan, Dr. A. R. Robertson, Charles Colwell Frank Hinnigen, Charles Benn. The two at the extreme right are unidentified.

# Chapter Thirteen

## Railroad Building

In the early 1870's there was a great deal of talk about establishing a railroad through Kent County, connecting Wallaceburg with Chatham, and running through the smaller communities. This would provide a means of shipping farm produce and lumbering products. It would be a feeder route to connect with the boats at Wallaceburg. In order to promote this idea and have it develop it was necessary to have the financial support of the communities involved. In each community it was attempted to pass a bylaw to procure money for the railroad project. An early pollbook tells the story of money raising in Wallaceburg. A vote on the matter was to be held on April 28, 1875. As a result, thirty-seven villagers were in favour and twenty-two were against granting \$15,500 to the project. The railroad reached Wallaceburg in approximately 1880. The station was located on the river bank near the present site of Warwick Lumber. About 1883, it was decided to extend the line to Sarnia and in that year, a wooden bridge was built over the Sydenham on the present site of the railroad bridge. This structure was later replaced by a steel bridge, and this too was replaced in 1959. The Huron and Erie Railroad was subsequently taken over by the Pere Marquette Railroad, and later this company was bought by the present owners, the Chesapeake and Ohio Railway.

Wallaceburg had another railway. A charter was granted in August 13, 1903 for the formation of an electric railroad between Wallaceburg, Chatham and Lake Erie. The project was spearheaded by Mr. D.A.Gordon. The route was opened November 21, 1905, and the company was known officially as the CHATHAM, WALLACEBURG AND LAKE ERIE RAILWAY. A car ran every hour to and from Wallaceburg. The station was located on Gillard Street. The station was the building now used as the Salvation Army Barracks. The trip to Chatham took fifty-seven minutes. Life for the C.W. & L.E. ended in 1927. Competition from the automobile forced the company out of business.

## Chapter Fourteen

### A Misunderstanding: The Negro Story

Over the years a damaging falsehood has persisted about a reputed bylaw which forbade any Negro to remain overnight in Wallaceburg. A thorough search of Wallaceburg archives has proven there is not and has never been such a bylaw. In fact there is no record of the idea even being discussed by the Councils.

While no form of prejudice is humorous, the origin of the mythical bylaw is somewhat humorous. It all started with . . . baseball! In the 1880's Wallaceburg was very proud of its baseball team. The players were recruited from the ranks of the lumberjacks and shipbuilders. Tough and fearsome lads they were, and quick-tempered too. A fight nearly always broke out after each ball game. Dresden too had a baseball team. Their players were burly lads looking for an excuse to work off their excess muscle energy. If this was not material for enough trouble, the teams were followed by fans . . . lumberjacks and shipbuilders, and often the playing of a baseball game did not satisfy their need for excitement. So, fights among the fans and players became a regular after-game feature. Dresden fans, usually fewer in number than Wallaceburg supporters would usually get the worst of the rivalry. The situation came to the point where the Dresden crew located a number of well known Negro boxers and wrestlers and took them along to the games in Wallaceburg. The Negroes gave a good account of their abilities. The Wallaceburg boys formed a super-gang and sent their rivals running to Dresden. The local boys decided that if any of the Dresdenite Negroes wanted to return to Wallaceburg, they would meet a committee of hand-picked toughs. Few of them met the challenge. With the decline of the baseball fights at the turn of the century also came the decline of picking on the Dresden Negroes. However, the story of the ban expanded and received publicity far and wide. As a result of this false but much-quoted rumor, Wallaceburg has, over the years received unfavourable publicity. Well, the truth is known and the story should be put in its proper place . . . in the vaults of the past.

# Chapter Fifteen

## SOME STATISTICS OF EARLY WALLACEBURG

### A CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF IMPORTANT DATES

- 1842 - Wesleyan Methodist Church built on LaFontaine St.
- 1875 - Wallaceburg incorporated as a village
- 1876 - First brick building . . . The Town Hall (present location of Hydro Bldg.)
- 1882 - H.E. Johnson appointed Clerk  
- Capt. J. Steinhoff built first brick house
- 1886 - North Side Public School built
- 1896 - Wallaceburg incorporated as a Town  
- Glass Works started
- 1903 - Sugar Factory started
- 1905 - Wallaceburg Brass Ltd. started  
- Chatham, Wallaceburg and Lake Erie railway began operation
- 1907 - Carnegie Library opened
- 1908 - Natural Gas system installed

### A CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF EARLY BUSINESSMEN, 1813 — 1879

1813	James Fisher	
1818	L. H. Johnston	Reeve
1825	D. B. McDonald	Postmaster
1829	A. McDougall	Attorney
1841	Theo. Martin	
1846	Lester Judson	Painter
1850	Albert Ayers	Livery
1851	Alex McKelves	
1851	Harvey Morris	Mill Owner
1853	Farquar McLennan	Livery
1856	William N. Ayers	Tailor
1858	William Becker	Blacksmith
1858	Charles Fraser	Customs & Land Surveyor
1859	Joseph Lalonde	Cabinet Maker
1865	Robert Arnold	Grocer and Provision Dealer
1867	George B. Mitchell	Medical Doctor
1872	George Lee	Watch Maker
1872	H. M. Mixner	Lumberman
1873	W. B. Lundy	Carpenter
1873	S. L. Mann	Livery
1876	W. H. Heath	Manufacturer
1877	Malcolm Ferguson	
1878	Dr. Summerville	Medical Doctor
1879	T. B. Gillard	Insurance

## SOME FIRSTS IN WALLACEBURG

The first medical attention was given by three women, not formally trained in medicine. They were Mrs. John Lillie, Mrs. Riddle and Mrs. Peck.

THE FIRST DOCTOR was Dr. Lester

THE FIRST RECTOR of the Church of England was Rev. Green (1865)

THE FIRST ROMAN CATHOLIC resident priest was Father Jeffery

THE FIRST PARTNERSHIP BUSINESS was Price and Hurley, 1854.

## CITIZENS AND BUSINESSMEN OF 1867

Albert Ayers	Livery
William Ayers	Tailor
Charles Babbitt	Teamster
John Bachus	Fireman
J. N. Beattie	Merchant
Robert Bell	Sawyer
Francis Bully	Labourer
William Campbell	Shoemaker
Michael Clancy	Lumberman
John Craig	Cabinet Maker
Charles Davis	Miller
John Dole	Indian Missionary
Isreal Dolson	Carpenter
James Edwards	Labourer
John Fisher	Carpenter
Peter Forhan	Grosc. & Liquor Store
Thomas Forhan	Harness Maker
Charles Fraser	Collector of Customs
Walter Hunter	Engineer
Daniel Johnson	Postmaster, Merchant
D. Johnson	Blacksmith
James Judson	Tanner & Currier
Lester Judson	Painter
Jos. Lalonde	Cabinet Maker
John Lapete	Watch Maker
John Lillie	Merchant
Justus Little	Clerk
Charles McDermant	Labourer
Daniel McDonald	Mason
H.M. McDonald	Tug Owner
Neil McDonald	Captain
William McDonald	Hotel Keeper
Alfred McDougall	Labourer
Wm. McDougall	Carpenter
Hector McLean	Lumberman
Alex McRae	Lumberman
Henry Martin	J. Of Peace
R.V. Martin	Agent
Theo Martin	Tanner, Shoemaker
A.B. Merritt	Sawyer
T. Murphy	Labourer
J. B. Newman	M.D.
Mrs. A. McLeod	Prop. of American Hotel
Aaron Gordon	Brick Maker
Alexander Hay	Merchant
B. Hubbell	Prop. of Mansion House



William Becker	Blacksmith
Lyman Bowers	Shoemaker
Neil Campbell	Tug Boat Prop.
Thomas Carolan	Mill Prop.
Peter Clapp	Farmer
Aaron Christner	Labourer
J. T. Davis	Meth. Episc. Minister
Lawrence Doyle	Harness
Patrick Evoy	Labourer
Richard Fish	Prop. of Mill House
Alexander Fraser	Farmer
C. J. Johnson	Clerk
James Johnson	Farmer, Reeve Merchant
Miles Langstaff	Land Agent
S. Lalonde	Grocer
George Lester	M.D.
Hiram Little	Grocer
Thomas Luker	Labourer
Alex. McDonald	Ship Builder
H. L. McDonald	Engineer
Neil McDonald	Engineer
R. McDonald	Labourer
A. McDougall	Confectioner
L. A. McDougall	Labourer
Alex McKay	Farmer
Alex McMillen	Sawyer
Robt. Mark	Westl. Meth. Minister
John martin	Miller
N. Mahews	Labourer
R. Miller	Carpenter
Robert Neville	Labourer
T. Niven	Grocer
James O'Neal	Clerk
W. Patterson	Grist & Sawmill
William Peck	Caulker
James Price	Clerk
Robert Rice	Ship Carpenter
Angus Ross	Labourer
James Scott	Bookkeeper
Capt. J. W. Steinhoff	Ship Owner Industrialist
Eltcher Stewart	School Teacher
Malcolm McKersell	Hotel Prop.
Aaron Thornton	Labourer
John Trerice	Blacksmith
Joseph Vincent	Mariner
Chas. Wagstaff	Shoemaker
Edward Parker	Mariner
Richard Peck	Boarding H.
John Price	Labourer
George Ray	Wagon Maker
J. Richardson	Ferryman
F. G. Sawyer	Accountant
Calvin Smith	Carpenter
J. W. Stewart	Clerk
G. W. Swindler	Cabinet Maker
Capt. G. Taylor	Tug Captain
Michal Tobin	Labourer
Wm. Verrell	Agent
Samuel Vincent	Farmer
Thomas West	Inn Keeper

## **LEE ENFIELD STORY**

On the corner of James and Duncan Street there stood a small wooden building which in the early eighties was a jewellery store. Mr. George Lee the proprietor was a jeweller by trade but an inventor by choice. In that small jewellery store, he developed the old, single shot rifle into the repeater rifle. His new invention was known to the world as the "Lee-Enfield Rifle." This famous weapon was developed and tested in Wallaceburg. It was used by various armies throughout the world.

## **THE FIRST ELECTRIC LIGHT**

According to information passed on by the older citizens, the first electric lights in town were carbon arc lights strung on a wire. The power for the lights was from a mill that stood on the corner of Murray and King Streets, opposite the D.A. Gordon School. The system was erected by a contractor named Martin Martin, who owned the mill at that time. Later the Premier Electric Light Company was formed and its power plant was located on Emily Street. This steam generating plant served the town until Sir Adam Becks' time when the Ontario Hydro System took over in 1914.

Most early domestic lights were carbon film bulbs which gave off a reddish glow. Electric lights were a safe and efficient improvement over lighting by coal oil. The coming of electric lights cut down greatly the number of destructive fires.

# Chapter Sixteen

## Stories of the Islands and Rivers

The Sydenham River, no doubt derived its name from the river of the same name, which is about six miles from the heart of London, England. The first name given to it by the early inhabitants was Bear Creek. Old maps designate the branches as "North and East Branches of Bear Creek." One Indian name for the river was "Janquakamik." The Chippewa name was Ah-yan-von-kege, which means many pools joined together. Maps of the 1830's name the tributaries of the north branch Otter Creek, Running Creek and Black Creek. Running Creek was used as a canoe route in the early days. In fact an Indian Village faced Running Creek near the present Baldoon Golf Course.

The river we call the Snye was named Chenal Ecarte (lost channel) by the French who paddled from the settlements near Detroit. It was so called because it was then a darkly wooded river which seemed to flow to unknown parts.

Walpole Island was originally named St. Mary's Island. It was named for the Island of St. Mary, on the West coast of Scotland, adjacent to the old Selkirk homestead. St. Anne's Island was originally called Ottawa Island.

Lake St. Clair, and the St. Clair River were named by LaSalle. He travelled these waterways on the feast day of St. Claire. The Indian name for St. Clair was "Tsiketo."

### THE WALPOLE ISLAND STORY

The majority of the inhabitants of Walpole Island are of the Pottawattami Tribe, a branch of the Algonquin Nation which was the most powerful and the most populous Indian nation of North America. Other names of the members of this nation were the Cree, Ojibway, Illinois, Kikapoos, Ottawa, Chippawa, Menoninies, Blackfeet and Adirondack. The Ottawas, Chippawas and Pottawattamees were originally one tribe, living in the vicinity of the Straits of Mackinaw but they eventually separated at Michillimackinac. In the days of the French rule in the northern part of North America, the Pottawattamee tribe was their most powerful ally. However, they along with the other Algonquin and Huron tribes, were defeated by the Iroquois and were forced to submit to their victors.

Some were driven north of the Great Lakes. The Pottawattamees refused to submit to the Iroquois, and moved to a settlement on the Detroit River. The Pottawattamees gained strength. The death of Chief Pontiac, and American sympathizer, was attributed to them. After Pontiac's defeat, the Pottawattamees became heir to the Iroquois lands. In 1790 a treaty was struck between the Indians and the British. It was called by Colonel McKee, and gave them lands along the Detroit and St. Clair Rivers. Up to this time there was no permanent settlement on Walpole Island. It had been a camping and fishing grounds for different tribes of Indians living in the vicinity. Walpole was declared a neutral island for wandering tribes who did not have a home.

The Indians of this district, in 1790 lived in clusters of huts with no floors, and without furniture. Houses were of bark or any material usable to form a shelter. In the centre of the floor there was a shallow fire pit. Here the cooking was done. A favourite meat was dog. Meat was usually roasted in small pieces and eaten hot. Other foods were fish and vegetables. There was usually a shortage of food during the winter months since the Indians were not in the habit of setting aside adequate supplies of food for winter. It was common to use sturgeon oil for perfume. Social life consisted largely of sitting around the fire at night and telling stories. When sickness struck, the Indians depended on the gods to help them. Each Indian had a striped pole about fifteen feet high in front of the hut. During sickness one would sing in a loud voice and dance around the pole in an attempt to drive away the sickness.

After 1790, Colonel McKee tried to induce some of the Indians living in Essex County

to move to Walpole Island. A few agreed, but many French families moved to the island and subsequently carried out many improvements. In 1825, there were only twenty-five Indians on Walpole. Shortly after, a proclamation was issued making Walpole Island an Indian Reserve, thus forcing the whites living there to settle elsewhere. All were off the Reserve by 1839. The buildings and clearings were left at the disposal of the Indians.

In 1838, some 800 Pottawattamees under Chiefs Mentogabout and Metba presented themselves before agent Jones of the Sarnia Reserve and agent Keating of the Lower St. Clair Reserve and asked permission to settle on Walpole Island. By 1844, the population had increased to about 800. Ojibways had come from the Saginaw and Shawanco Reserve and Ottawa had come from Sault St. Marie. Many of the warriors of the War of 1812 and their families had also settled there.

## **WALPOLE TODAY**

Since coming to Walpole, the Pottawattamees have become very prosperous. They are held up as models in many parts of the world for their modern thinking and advancement. Within the last two years, since taking complete responsibility for their own local government, the community at Walpole has responded quickly to growth as a modern municipality. Main roads have been paved. A water system is now in operation. The community is protected by modern fire-fighting and police facilities. A modern housing subdivision graces the western side of the island, as well as two stores, a gas station, a restaurant, and a Public Library. Schooling from kindergarten to Grade 3 is provided on the island. From the fourth grade to the end of High School, the Walpole children travel daily by bus to Wallaceburg. Walpole, an island of 45,000 acres has a population of approximately 1,800. Walpole is the envy of many Indian communities throughout Canada and the United States.

## **PONIES OF WALPOLE AND ST. ANNE'S ISLAND**

Occasionally, one may catch a glimpse of wild ponies on St. Anne's Island. Until a few years ago when they were mostly rounded up, the ponies roamed at will over Walpole and St. Anne's Island. They were originally brought to the island after the War of 1812. They came from the mid-western plains of the United States, and were obtained by the Pottawattamees after they defeated the Iroquois nation.

## **WALPOLE, THE FINAL RESTING PLACE OF A LEADER: TECUMSEH**

Tecumseh, or Shooting Star, the Great Indian leader was born about 1768 at old Piqua, Springfield, Ohio. His mother was a Cherokee and he was of the Shawanoes (Shawnees) of the Delaware Race. In later years, Tecumseh and his many followers aided the British in the War of 1812. In the Battle of the Thames, near Thamesville, in the year 1813, Tecumseh was killed. He was shot by Colonel Richard Johnson, Commander of the American Kentucky Mounted Riflemen. Johnson's horse stumbled on a log among some bushes and while Tecumseh was about to dispatch him with a tomahawk, the American Colonel drew a pistol and mortally wounded the great Indian in the breast. According to a report by an Ottawa Chief, "Noonday", Tecumseh's body was laid on a blanket in a shelter. From this point, some historians disagreed as to the subsequent fate of Tecumseh's remains. The following account was related by Mr. Isaac Nahdee, a trusted friend. His ancestor, Edward Nahdee, was an aide to Tecumseh during the War of 1812.

After Tecumseh was slain, his body was removed from the battle area and taken by canoe to a point near Wardsville. Here he was first buried. The grave was marked by a large tree. As time went on, the Longwoods Train became well travelled. It was decided to transfer the remains to a more secluded spot. The head of the Pottawattamees, Chief Shaoginish, who had also been one of Tecumseh's first lieutenants, made a decision in this matter. He chose St. Anne's Island. It was considered by him an ideal spot because it was remote and superstitions about the island would tend to keep people away. The island was considered haunted because of its many marsh fires. These of course were caused by spontaneous combustion of marsh gases. A site was chosen here for the grave. The grave was always guarded by an Indian who dressed partly in Indian clothing and partly in white man's clothing. He had been a follower of Tecumseh during battle

days. The grave was marked by a cross, a staff, and a British flag, and was clearly visible from the Snye River.

When I was in my early teens, I frequently visited the Fisher family, neighbours of my grandparents. At that time, old grandfather Fisher was in his nineties. He had lived here most of the 1800's and knew in detail much of the early history. Grandfather Fisher liked to talk of the old days. One particular Sunday in conversation with his grandson, James Fisher, and myself, he told us about a grave nearby on St. Anne's Island. Pointing in the direction of the island and giving details of its location, he told us where to find the grave of Tecumseh, the Great Indian Chief. We secured a boat and rowed across the narrow Snye. We found a grave which was marked by a wooden cross and staff. We told others of our "find" and a group of local men, headed by Dr. Mitchell, a local medical doctor and historian, organized a crew to go to St. Anne's Island for the purpose of digging at this site. They uncovered a wooden box which contained the remains of a human skeleton. The box and contents were taken to Dr. Mitchell's house in Wallaceburg for a close and intense scrutiny. The doctor measured the skeleton and found that the measurements conformed with those of Tecumseh. He was quick to notice the healed over area of a once broken leg bone. It was discovered that Tecumseh had broken his leg during a buffalo hunt when he was nineteen years old. As Dr. Mitchell's investigation proceeded, an Indian guard remained at the scene, closely scrutinizing the actions of the white man. After the investigation was complete, the box and contents were returned to the three oldest chiefs on Walpole Island. The box was kept at Mr. Nahdee's house. A conference was held, and the three old chiefs decided that each would take parts of the remains and scatter them over the Island where no white man or Indian would ever find them. They substituted other bones in the box and turned them over to the Indian band. These are the bones sealed in the Tecumseh Cairn located at the front of the Island. The only remaining parts of the original remains are in my possession. One of Tecumseh's teeth and parts of the box including a nail are among my valued collection. I will give these to the Indians of Walpole Island when a suitable place, such as a museum, is established.

I thoroughly believe Mr. Nahdee's version of Tecumseh's final resting place. Mr. Nahdee was a very intelligent and trustworthy man.

## **THE LEGEND OF THE ST. CLAIR RIVER**

"Peto-Gu-Sic" lived on Walpole Island and in 1929 claimed to be 114 years of age. He could not converse in English but through an interpreter told the "Legend of the St. Clair River" as related by his father who had lived in Detroit when the settlement consisted of only twelve dwelling places. The story is told of the St. Clair River when it emptied from the huge lake close to the Canadian side, but it was changed by a great bird with wings of a two mile span. The great bird landed near the mouth of the river and began to wash itself. With motions of ducking, diving and thrashing, the bird aroused a tremendous commotion. Trees were uprooted and wigwams were demolished. Canoes were uplifted and blown far south as far as the Thames River. As a result the shores and pathway of the river were changed.

This, in modern interpretation would mean that a terrific tornado could easily have altered the shallow entrance of the St. Clair River at the rapids.

In addition, Peto-Gu-Sic was convinced the mysterious doings surrounding the Baldoon mystery were caused by the whiteman interfering with the Indian spirits of the sacred medicine lodge situated near Whitebread. Resentful, the Indians showed their discontent by haunting the McDonald homestead on the Snye.

# Chapter Seventeen

## Ethnic Groups

People who visit our community are amazed at the wonderful farms that surround our town. Reading the names painted on the barns reveals various European origins for the farmers. Scanning our telephone directory reveals the same situation.

As previously mentioned, the early inhabitants were of Anglo-Saxon origin. Some were also of French descent. At present we have a mixture of many kinds of people, living and working and enjoying the fruits of their labours. Through use of skills brought from their native lands they have contributed much to the development of Wallaceburg and the surrounding district.

About 1904-8 as the growing and cultivation of the sugar beet was begun here, there grew a need for workers with experience in this crop. It was decided to go to Holland and Belgium where sugar beets had been grown for many years. Subsequently, many Dutch and Belgian families settled here. These new citizens were different in many ways. The men nearly always dressed in corduroy. Some had wooden shoes, and walked in the middle of the road, as was the custom in their homeland. Of course, there was a language barrier. They lived near the sugar factory on both sides of the river in houses built by the Sugar Company. This section of town was known to the natives as "Belgian Town". The Dutch and Belgians made their own beer and wine. For lunch, a loaf of bread was brought into the field. Mothers worked in the beets with babies close by in baskets.

Like our first settlers, the Scots, the main contribution of the Belgian and Dutch settlers was through the land. Their agricultural abilities along with industrial skills have helped to build the surrounding country and our town to the high level of prosperity we now enjoy. We had the land and they had the talent to develop it. You need only to take a ride around this district to see for yourself the contribution of the Dutch and the Belgians.



1903 WALLACEBURG LACROSSE CLUB  
Back Row: Les Appleford, M. Dulong, Dr.  
Hamilton, Dr. A. G. Campbell, Bert Wilson,  
Tommy Lawlor, T. B. Dundas, Pete Libby,

Dr. H. A. Taylor. Centre: M. Vanderburg, Bill  
Boulton, S. S. Huntingdon. Front: Alf. Appleyar,  
Dan Buckley, George Knight, Charles Rose, Har-  
ry Labatt.

## Chapter Eighteen

In our story we have attempted to give a general outline of the events and some of the people who made these events into history. We did not give too much detail, but outlined our history so that to read this you could get a resume of the history leading up to the present.

We would like to give more detail of the stories handed down by some of our citizens who lived back in the early days so they will not be lost, and could be enjoyed by the present generation.

We would like to refer back to the first part of the story where it mentions the Treaty of 1790 which gave the lands of what is now Dover and Chatham Townships, the dividing line being our present Base Line in Front of Libby's which was known as the Indian Line.

There was another treaty which had a great bearing on our present Wallaceburg. That 1790 Treaty left the greater part of Lambton County and part of Chatham Township still in the hands of the Indians. Many settlers were on these lands as "squatters", particularly along the Snye and Sydenham and St. Clair Rivers. It became necessary to acquire those lands north of the Base Line in order to establish settlements, and particularly for us as Wallaceburg was part of the Indian lands. In 1825 a treaty was signed by the Chippewas and by George Ironsides on behalf of our Lord, the King, which ceded all lands from the Red River Maitland to Sombra and eastward to Woodstock. These lands included the reservations of Kettle Point, Sarnia, and Walpole Island. This total area of 2,200,000 acres cost the government approximately five thousand dollars.

In this land, our present site of Wallaceburg was included. At the time of the 1825 Treaty there were about thirteen people living on this location and they had been simply squatters on the land. In fact, not only could deeds not be granted prior to the Treaty, but also not until the land was properly surveyed. It was the formal beginning of this survey, which came a few years after the Treaty, that gave us the deeded location of our town.

The people living in the area were given the first chance to purchase property for a trifling sum because the Crown wished to have the land settled. Thus we have the early surveys named after the people who lived on them; Baby, Langstaff, McDougall, McDonald, McLean, and McGregor.

One of our early settlers was a McDonald, the family of which I would like to give the story as told by one who was born here and later became mayor of our town.

Donald McDonald, known as little Donald, was granted two hundred acres of land which is now part of Wallaceburg. It extended from the Third Concession from a line on the North Sydenham to what is now Forhan Street thence southward to Dufferin Avenue. This area includes our present Central (Elementary) School and High School. It was originally donated to the town by William McDonald for the first brick school which was burned in 1915.

William McDonald became mayor of our town in the year 1909 to 1910. He was born in the early part of 1840. His father lived in a log house on the Wilson Kerr subdivision which is part of the town of Wallaceburg. He built a house in the Colwell Survey in later years; it is still standing. It has been bricked over and is probably one of the oldest houses in our town (1969). His two sons, William and Donald, and daughter, Ellen, lived there. It is interesting to note that following Running Creek in front of his house was the main road which was used before Dufferin Avenue and #40 Highway were surveyed.

William built a house on Dufferin Avenue next to the present Brewers Retail Store, and lived there when he was mayor. In 1905 the Wallaceburg News published a special newspaper in which he contributed his impressions of Wallaceburg and vicinity. These we would like to give in detail so that they will not be lost to posterity. Some of this material has already appeared in previous newspapers. However, even though this



current endeavour may seem repetitious, we feel that this account should be added to our book.

Prior to the year 1796, the tract now known as the North Gore of Chatham Township formed part of the wide domain of the Chippewa Indian. It was then an untamed wilderness. Then no pale face settler and picturesque log cabin stood out in bold relieve, a prominent feature in its wild, peculiar and rather confined landscape. No "Sny" spirits, the spirits of Highland superstition and devilment, save the "Great Spirit" of the red man, frequented the clear waters of the "lost channel" or that "uncanny locality, lot B, on the 4th. Wild nature alone was in possession, and lived and died its rude, gloomy and external existence.

But in that year, by treaty dated 7 September 1797, the principal chiefs, warriors and people of the Chippewa Nation of Indians, did, by an instrument under their picture signatures - totums - surrender and convey unto His Majesty, King George III, for and in consideration of the sum of eight hundred pounds (Quebec currency), value in goods, estimated according to the Montreal price, all and singular that tract of land lying north of the Indian line and east of the St. Clair, in area about twelve miles square, and comprising within its boundaries the western portion of Chatham Gore above named, said instrument being subscribed to by 13 Chippewa Chiefs as principals, three Ottawa Chiefs as witnesses, four interpreters, six Indian and Western District Officials, and the representative of his Majesty, Alex. McKee, D.S.G.D.I.G., I.A.

Notwithstanding this surrender, it was some years, and not until the year 1809, ere the forest's solitude -- yet trackless and untrodden -- was broken by the advent of the white settler.

About that period the greater of the many misfortunes which befell the Baldoon Colony had already overtaken it and was trying the patience of the settlers, several of whom had already found and secured locations, and more congenial, if less dependent homes-squatters homes, for as yet there was no surveys -- among the woods or open glades along the northern shore of the Chenal Ecarte, and amid the prairie reaches along the southern bank of Bear Creek.

Among other pioneers who at that time, or as dates shortly subsequent thereto, settled upon the northern shore were James Johnson, on Lot 3, Con. 1, a location which in after years became the cognomen of Johnston's Point, or Bend, a well known trade resort, particularly in the decade at 1830 - 40; Charles Fisher on lot 4, also upon the stream a little below; James Stewart on lot 2, a little further up and John T. McDonald and Donald McDonald on lots A and B, Con. 4 still farther up, respectively, the latter location being that "earthly" habitation of the devils known as the "Sny Spirits" whose peculiar manifestations in the year 1829, created such excitement far and near. Below what is now Wallaceburg on the south shore, and particularly at a point now known as the old McDougall homestead, on which the burying ground is situated, several members of the family of that name had also located at an early date.

But settlement made slow progress and from the period named until the survey of the tract by Thomas Smith, Deputy Surveyor, in 1821, and its incorporation with the County of Kent under the name of Sombra Township the same year, few additions to the population by way of settlement were made thereto, and the old St. Clair tract remained beyond the mere cover margin, as ever -- a deep forest primeval.

Wallaceburg was non est. Its site was still a wilderness, as it was on the arrival of the Baldoon emigrants in 1804. The more venturesome of these hardy settlers who ascended Sydenham's stream, found it a dense forest whose dark lines of gloomy giants margined the shores to the waters edge. Its solitude was then extreme. Then no welcome sound in human tongue broke the painful stillness. Save for the occasional splash of the waterfowl in the wild rice beds near by, or the stroke of the woodpecker's bill against the dead trees in the forest's deep recesses, the silence was complete. Yet evidence of humanity was not wanting. An Indian village of Shawnees was not far distant, and marks of their later hunting camps on the "Point" were not yet obliterated. In the rich mold of the upper soil of the latter lay, in their long sleep in many a layered ridge and mound, under



1912 WALLACEBURG BASEBALL TEAM Left to right: Jimmy Bachus, Joe Rankin, Joe Lockhart, R. Nealy, Sport Allan,

Wellington Boyle, Alf Moses, Charles Thompson, Carl Young, C. Moore, Davey Downs.

the carol and grateful shade of maples which they loved, the remains of many warrior red and bold, and old and ancient-Indians, who perhaps had fought the pioneer pale face of yore, the English at the "surprise of the forts" under Pontiac or the Americans under Prophet and Tecumseh. Indeed in the eddies under the banks, it was not yet a very rare scene to see moored there the red canoe fleet, and above, deep in the cooling shade, the picturesque Indian wigwam camp. Nor had the Indian camp been the sole occupant of that historic spot, but other fires have lighted up wierd like, brightness the deep darkness of the forest night. Here in 1814 General McArthur's rugged troopers bivouacked, sang and caroused. Here, in earlier times, a great French commander and his voyageur soldiers and Indians rested and feasted, on their way to northern forts; and who will say that even the great La Salle may not have sailed the "Sny" and Sydenham's broad and deep waters in the good ship Griffin, and moored against its wood bound shore. That a story was current among the Indians that long prior to the white man's advent in the district, a French commander had arrived there, was well known to the early settlers, and that an armed body of Europeans must have visited, if not traversed, the Bear Creek Valley prior to General McArthur, is evidenced by round shot being found embedded in standing timber, over which many a year's growth of rings had grown.

Such was the site in 1804 and such it was in 1822 when at the latter date Pioneer Laughlin McDougall, a Baldoon settler, Moses-like of old, desiring pastures new and green moved upon and took possession of Lot 13, Con. 2, Sombra, now Chatham Gore, planting his camp at a spot now described as sub-division No. 1, Block A. McDougall survey, fronting on Wallace Street. Here he, about the year named, erected thereon a log house, which in course of time served as Indian (truck: store, tavern and dwelling house, and was in the year following when visited by assessor Jas. Dolsen, the highest up river domicile, excepting perhaps the shanties of Messrs Boyles and Bolton, who had settled along the upper river reaches, near what is now the village of Florence about the same time. To this rude and primitive erection he in after years built in front of it a rather substantial frame building, which if we are not misinformed, still remains and forms part of what is known as "Patterson's" store. On the same lot -- later known as the "Peck Property" -- and in rear of the house aforesaid, at the water's edge, he in 1834 or thereabout, built the schooners "Wallace" and "Selkirk", the first vessels of the Baldoon's fleet, and the first to navigate modern Bear Creek's deep waters. Across the street he sometime after erected the more pretentious hostelry of the then period, a resort known for its famed three cent swipes of whiskey, and from the effects of which not a few free brawls were instituted, a feature, however, not more common to McDougall's than to other taverns of that day -- a resort too, under a later regime, for a gang of men, perhaps far more temperate, much less noisy, but non the less wicked and lawless -- the 1856 horse thieves. Burned down, the site of the same is now occupied by the premises of Alex McDougall's solicitor.

Laughlin McDougall, a few years after his first settlement was joined by the McGregor family of 1812-14 war renown, who for services then rendered by the gallant captain, secured some 850 acres, principally on the 1st Concession and settled thereon upon Lot 12, where at a point a little south of McDougall's he erected about the year 1831 a building in which he kept store for 12 or 15 years. He was followed by Hugh McCallum, who, obtaining from the patentee, Francis Baby, the south half of the original lot No. 12, on the 2nd concession, built thereon on what is now sub-division Lot no. 10, river, McCallum's survey, a log house, and subsequently, in 1835 a frame in which he taught school and kept post office. It is to Hugh McCallum a Baldoon emigrant, that the village owes its name, for it was he -- the first P.M. -- that took from it the ugly appellation of "40 Thieves" and the somewhat more appropriate name of the "Forks" and gave it standing and respectability under the civilized cognomen of Wallaceburg, so called after Scotland's patriot, Sir William.

Probably next upon the scene appeared James Baby, whose father Francis under patent 17th March, 1828, had acquired Lot 12, Con. 2 and now, at all events, about the year 1839, the former erected thereon what is now Lot 7, McCallum survey, south corner of Wallace and Bridge Streets, a somewhat pretentious building in which, for a short time he kept store, a building which is yet to the fore and now does duty as LaLonde's furniture establishment. At the opposite corner on Lot 1, of same survey, pioneer Uncle



WALLACEBURG BAND OF 1914 Standing, left to right: Reg Steer, Bill Boker, E. D. Snively, Ray Martin, Ivan Wickens, Earl Wickens, Emerson Hooper, Bruce Bourne, Stan Brown,

Charles Shaw, Jim Christie, Bill Thompson, Randall Purser, Ashton Lillie, Bert Lapatourel. Kneeling: Ray Thompson, Sam Dunderdale, Von Ayres.

Johnson, from the Sny store, first set out his shingle as a merchant in a frame building, yet standing, now doing duty the rear portion of a newer house, with which it is incorporated, the second house on the west side of Water Street from the river.

So far the embryo village of the "Forks" centered on the south bank of the river. Across on the north shore, the bush had still possession. True, as early as 1825, at the "Gore" now the principal business point, a squatter had erected a long shanty on a spot which would now place it in Nelson Street, between Jas. Scotts store and Mr. Little's opposite, that is, between No. 4 and 5. It was followed by a frame, the first in the locality, erected about 1833, by one Jas. Henderson, in which he kept school and in which subsequently, about 1840 Hector McDonald under "Aunt Christy's" good cheer and ministering care, kept boarding house and dispensed hospitality upon temperance principles to the wearied and benighted travellers, becoming in time a welcome and well known resort far and near.

Pioneer Hector McLean had pitched his tent in the upper part of the original lot, and was affecting a clearing; but between these and excepting these breaks, the forest stood intact. On Langstaff's Point on the opposite gore, double married American Case had located himself, and more subsequently, Archibald McDougall; his brother Hector on the lot just east of him.

Such at this period was the prospective city such its stock in trade. It may have possessed other habitations, but they were not visible through the thick bush nor accessible by the many Venetian like water ways. Its stores were very common place, and little better than trading huts -- barter places for the exchange of the rich fur harvests of the hunter and trapper, and the simple necessities that enter into the needs of his household, that of the settler, or the camp of the lumberer. But it grew, and ere another decade had passed by on its slow and uneventful way, relieved at intervals in its monotonous life by the arrival of a timber or stave vessel, the place, thanks to the generous forests bordering on its streams, had assumed the appearance and characteristics of a thriving village.

Meantime, surveys and sub-divisions of the original lots had been instituted -- McDougalls' about 1833, McCallum's in 1836, both on the southbank, and James Baby's in 1840 on the north bank, which late was named Babyville, as distinctive from Wallaceburg. In the later survey which covered not only the historic point but what is now the central and most valuable portion of the village, L.H. Johnston was the first to invest and build. This investment was No. 4 the side of Jas. Scott's store and warehouse and was purchased for a mere Bagatelle -- some cow or jack knife consideration. Indeed, as evidence of the modest value put upon Babyville, lots and as showing that the south was monopolizing the "commerce" of the place, it is given as a fact that lots nos. 6, 7, 8, 33 and 34 of the same survey and now at least worth (the naked lots alone) \$8,000 to \$10,000 were in 1841 thrown in as a sop for the completion of a horse trade. On this lot, No. 4, Mr. Johnson erected a frame building and store whose cellar walls of substantial stone, in rear of Mr. Scott's store near the river bank, is still easily discernable. The same site formed part of the ancient Indian burying ground already referred to, in which in course of the cellars excavation several sets of red man's bones were unearthed, as well as many relics of the long Indian past. Indeed, prior to this resurrection the children attending pedagogue Hendersons school, had often, with nothing better than pointed sticks, dug up the brass pewter and silver ornaments -- brooches, earrings, chains, necklets, etc. -- which the Indian braves busked and bedecked his red bride of the forest, and which were buried with the dear muskrat eaters at their decease, to be worn in the far off spirit land. To the east of the same lot, upon which the site of the old brick yard many more Indian remains were disinterred, accompanied by gun barrels, gun locks, flints, powder, flasks, and other red mans paraphernalia. It was here too, that in preparing a log for a clay mixer a round shot was found imbedded therein, the wound made by the ball long over grown.

Buildings here and there now began to run up, crowding back the forest, and warehouses and wharves to fringe the stream, not forgetting the establishment across its waters of the primitive scow ferry. A schoolhouse, the first, had sometime made its



JAMES  
ST.  
WALLACEBURG  
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appearance in the shape of a small building, now doing duty as a dwelling house on Nelson Street, owned by Captain Fish, nearly opposite the residence of Hector McLean, and under the guidance of its worthy dominie, was exercising its benign and civilizing influence upon the young ideas. A church also saw light about this time, the Wesleyan Methodist Church whose original site is yet marked by that of the English Church of the present. And to make provision for its large and increasing foreign trade, the place was made in March 1846, a port of entry and the establishment of a live custom house, under the supervision of Col. Bell was an established fact, and one, too, which the numerous and bold smugglers were not gratefully cognizent.

Nor was the village devoid of the industrial establishments. Later on -- in 1852 -- on his suburban estate at the lower end of the village, erratic Mr. Bates, of Batehampton so called, erected there his mammoth saw mill, the most complete of its kind in Western Canada, and of which the Burgers were extremely and justly proud. Another structure of the same nature arose in the "Marsh" mill at the east end, south side, two or three years thereafter. Indeed the lumber interest in its various branches was the village's chief, almost sole support. Its prominent features and characteristics partook of it. Its houses were wooden, and its sidewalks, where any, and fences were of the same material. Booms of staves in the long reaches of the river lay in millions, timber in stacks lay along the banks at every available point, and logs in thousands, lined the highways and clearings. Timber was omnipotent. Here was the lumberman's paradise; and his inflated pockets and pregnant money wallets made the villagers' heart glad. In this progressive lumber cycle matters continued to run until 1857-8 when alas, under the financial troubles of that year the whole fabric collapsed. It hibernated for a season.

From this exhausted and sleepy condition it gradually emerged to new life still very largely but less dependent upon the lumber interest and more upon a gradually increasing agricultural surrounding, it steadily gained until it had reached its present enviable position. In this transitory stage it presented for some years a somewhat dilapidated appearance; it was dirty, its drawling street on the north side, innocent of sidewalks and composed of at best, a half dozen very ordinary stores double that number of tradesmen's shops and dwellings, the inevitable tavern, a dwelling house or two alternated with a stable and vacant lots -- the playground of grown children and roost of trading Indians -- running from the bush to the river, whence crossing by the nearly picturesque scow ferry and ascending the north bank, the street description was repeated. Here and there in the unprepossessing line stood out at intervals, particularly at its outer margins, a house perhaps with garden surroundings, whose better appearance and trimness betokened, if not wealth, at least comfort and refinement. Beyond, and backed and relieved by generous nature's graniture at the outskirts and the picture is complete.

True, it had a redeeming feature in its pretty and sprightly girls, whose good and merry looks, made one at times forgetful of men in leather long boots, cordwood and cant hooks, and wish that instead of the one annual camp meeting -- a long established institution of its shady environs -- there had been a dozen.

From 1860 to 1870 the place grew slowly and surely, but more rapidly with the decade ending 1880. In the first came to the fore many of the principal citizens; Messrs Hay, Beattie, Forhan, Steinhoff, Fraser, McDonald, and Scott, not forgetting Messrs Johnston, Judson, Little, Lillie, Clancy, Patterson, McDougall and others, who had sometime preceded them. In the same decade arose Forhan's brick store, several churches and many private homes.

To sum up its inception as a village dates from say 1835 when it received its cognomen and had its post office established. Made a port of entry in 1846, it exported in that year goods to the amount of \$34,389 (in 1841 it was only \$5,758) in 1857 it was \$69,017 and in 1870 \$227,478. In 1850 it became headquarters, under Clerk John Lillie, of No. Five Division Court. In 1873 the north bridge and in 1873 the east bridge was built, as in 1876 was the town hall. In 1871 Asa Cronk was publishing its first newspaper, the Westley Advocate and in 1880 by Mr. Wrigley the Valley Record. In 1874 it was in-

corporated a village and on 8th January following first sat the village council. With a population of 1526, a ratepayers roll of 80 and an assessment amounting to 180,000, it stands among the county municipalities second to none in all that tends to the making of a town -- advantageous position, enterprising progression and commercial importance.

For the enlightenment of the later generation of Wallaceburgers we give the following changes since the almanac was published some 28 years ago:

Patterson's store not in existence.

Little's store - Now Ruttan's grocery.

LaLonde's furniture store - Heath's furniture stand.

Peck property - Now occupied by Wm. Piggott's grocery.

Jas. Scott's store - Now Dr. Rowlands office. Jas. Scott is now nurseryman.

Aunty Christy's boarding house - Now a residence opposite A.A. Wright's on Duncan St. and very little altered, perhaps the oldest building in town.

A. Voissard's bicycle shop was built by Lyle Johnson and this was his first store, and then on Nelson street not far from the river.

The old Methodist Church afterwards used as the English Church, was opposite Sam Mann's residence.

To bring the story of the development of Wallaceburg and Vicinity to a conclusion it remains to be said that this is one of the most interesting and rewarding places for a person to live.

If a person in Wallaceburg works hard and uses his talents properly, he cannot fail.

For all of us, the old saying "Snye Water will always bring you back" is something we can appreciate.

Frank L. Mann



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