

TRAILS, ROADS & INNS

TRAILS

Trails created by people of the First Nations were adopted by the newly arriving settlers in the late 18th century. One such trail, along the northern shore of Lake Ontario was the forerunner of present-day Highway 2. Another trail, joining Lake Ontario to Rice Lake, presents contemporary evidence of indigenous peoples' means of trail marking: a hardwood sapling intentionally bent-over and fixed, to indicate the desired direction.

Walking in summer and snowshoeing in winter remained the most reliable means of personal transport for many years, even after the establishment of roads.



Photo by Whitney Lake of Red Oak in Alnwick Township

"Road Between Kingston and York, Upper Canada" (ca. 1830), watercolour, by James Pattison Cockburn (1779-1847).

Winter transportation was possible over snow roads or on the ice of lakes, hence farmers did most of their transporting of crops by sleigh in winter. Winter was also the best time for visiting:

(The farmer) employs, usually, a part of the winter at least, in visiting his distant friends. Travelling here is so habitual that a farmer and his wife think it nothing extraordinary to make an excursion of 6 or 700 miles in the winter to see their friends.

D'Arcy Boulton, *Sketch of His Majesty's Province of Upper Canada*, 1805

In 1793 by an Act of the First Parliament of Upper Canada all roads were placed under the supervision of overseers called "pathmasters". Six years later one of them, Asa Danforth, was awarded a government contract of \$90 per mile to make a road along Lake Ontario from Kingston to Ancaster. He received permission to grant up to 40 labourers a payment of 200 acres each for their services.