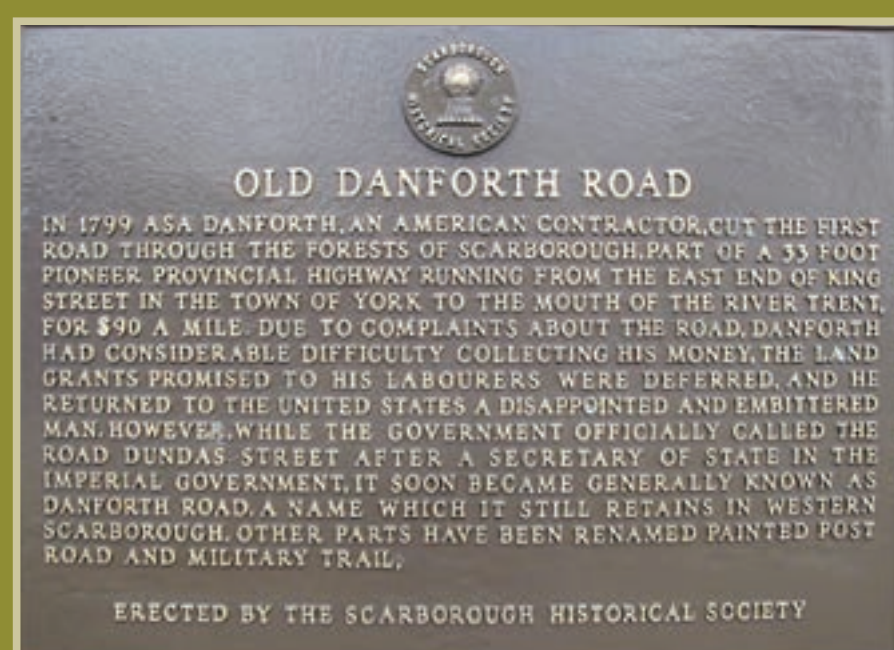


TRAILS, ROADS & INNS

ROADS BEGUN

SOME EARLY INITIATIVES

THE DANFORTH ROAD 1802



Asa Danforth's road started at Kingston, followed the shoreline of Lake Ontario to the Adolphustown ferry, crossed Prince Edward County to Carrying Place, then followed roughly the north shore of Lake Ontario through Cobourg to York and around Burlington Bay. Danforth took only three years to complete the road since the Kingston-Trenton area had been cleared

previously by Loyalist settlers. Unfortunately, since his work was not of the highest quality and no plans were made for its maintenance, the road, "which was full of stumps and unfit for carriages or wagons, fell into disrepair".

THE KINGSTON ROAD 1816

During the War of 1812 it became clear that a new road needed to be built. Called the Kingston Road, it ran from Kingston to York, incorporating the Danforth Road in some parts but, in general, running closer to the lakeshore. Completed in 1816, it ran through Napanee, Belleville, Trenton and Cobourg to York. Operating mainly in winter, for sleigh travel, this journey cost \$18 per passenger. This road became part of King's Highway #2.

Several companies operated stage coach service along the Kingston Road in the period 1817-1830: the owners were Samuel Purdy, Jonathan Ogden and H. Horton. In 1830 Cobourg's own William Weller established his stagecoach line, a highly successful enterprise which lasted until the 1850s, when the advent of the railroad caused the stagecoach to be outmoded.

While the condition of the Kingston Road was always tenuous, winter remained the best time to travel. Spring presented a special set of problems. One writer tells of his trip along this road:

In the month of May 1831, we first visited York (Toronto). We left Port Hope in Ogden's stage about 2 o'clock a.m. and arrived at York at midnight. Horses were changed once on the route. The road at this late season was almost impassable in several places and the passengers had to walk through the woods. At the Rouge (River), they had to make their way on foot, the horses having work enough to drag the empty stage coach through the dangerous pass. We were nearly two days and a night getting from Cobourg to Toronto.

A traveller in 1839 wrote:

The frost was out of the ground and our stage stuck fast several times, and the poor horses were jaded almost to exhaustion. We frequently walked along the fences, leaving our poor horses to drag the empty coach through the mud as best they could. We were nearly two days and a night getting from Cobourg to Toronto.

Charles Dickens, visiting Canada in 1842, reported:

There was the swamp, the bush, and the perpetual chorus of frogs, the rank unseemly growth, the unwholesome steaming earth. Here and there, and frequently too, we encountered a solitary broken-down wagon, full of some new settler's goods. It was a pitiful sight to see one of these vehicles deep in the mire; the axletree broken; the wheel lying idly by its side; the man gone miles away to look for assistance; the woman seated among their wandering household goods with a baby at her breast, a picture of forlorn, dejected patience; the team of oxen crouching down mournfully in the mud and breathing forth such clouds of vapor from their mouths and nostrils that all the damp mist and fog around seemed to have come direct from them.

