

River Road

A couple of stories from the River Road

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It is somewhat ironic that the River Road begins - or ends - at a place called Storyland, because contained on this road are the kinds of rich stories that give an area its culture and its color.

The River Road covers a good-sized geographic area. But the geography lesson is only half the story. The other half is the stories themselves. If you've lived there long enough, you are sure to have a story, or two, or fifty.

And there are no better people to find out the stories of the road from, than people who have lived on or near the road for their entire lifetimes. People such as Steve McGregor of Lochwinnoch and Doris Humphries of Castleford.

The first thing lifelong residents say about the River Road is it was so muddy and difficult to drive on. For the people who lived along it, pulling motorists out of the ditches was all part of being good neighbors.

"The River Road was very crooked and muddy in the spring of the year and I remember pulling people out there," said McGregor.

"I used to have to get the horses in when it was pouring rain to get people out of the gully," motioning to a spot just past his home. "And the same with anybody living along the River Road."

"It was just a crooked snakes-trail," he added.

Thankfully for today's drivers, the crooked old road was first redone in 1949. In 1962, it was designated a county road, then designated a development road in 1963, so it was completely reconstructed and paved, paid 100 per cent by the province.

One of his favorite anecdotes McGregor tells is the time his father pulled Bert Lindsay, once the goaltender for the Renfrew Millionaires hockey team, out of the gully near their home.

With Lindsay that day was his son Ted, who became NHL Hall-of-Famer Terrible Ted Lindsay.

And for an out-of-the-way spot, the River Road has attracted its share of interesting people.

A cottager in the 1930's was the sister of the president of Wrigley's chewing gum company. And one day, a big car stopped at the home of McGregor's cousin to ask for directions. It turned out to be the family of Timothy Eaton.

If there is a spirit on the River Road, it probably rests somewhere in the area of Castleford. That is where the road, the rails

the Jubys and the Johnson are names familiar to all in the Castleford area.

Much like Lochwinnoch and many of the other villages along the road, Castleford was once the home of a post office, the train station, and a school.

Doris Humphries, a long-time River Road resident who chronicled the history of Horton township in 1986, said it was the postal service that helped make Castleford a community.

The hamlet had a post office in 1832, even before Arnprior, Renfrew or Pembroke. With the coming of the railway, Castleford Station opened another post office in 1889. The post office was finally closed in 1970, but the speed with which mail could be delivered remains hard to beat.

"The mail was very fast. You could put something on the 20-to-9 train, it would be sorted on the train, and be delivered to Renfrew



The rail line that runs along the River Road - it was critical for transportation and communication with the rest of the world.

before noon," Humphries said.

"You can't get anything that fast now anywhere," she said.

Most people think of Castleford as little more than the train tracks, the general store and Castleford United Church, but Humphries said she (and other Castlefordians) considers the hamlet to stretch along the road from almost the McNab township line in the east to the Little Brown Church in the west.

"It's a village along the road. Someone came to my door once looking for Castleford. I said 'you're in it.'"

Although the local train hasn't made its three-times-a-day run for more than 25 years, trains and the railway tracks still occupy a prominent place in the consciousness of the residents of the River Road.



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