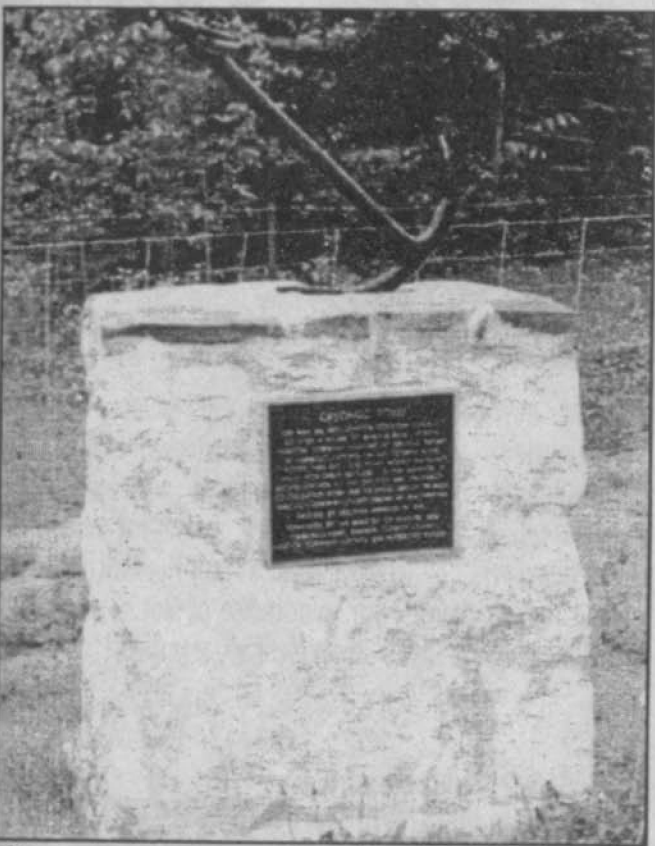


And there are no better people to find out the stories of the road from, than people who have lived on or near the road for their entire lifetimes. People such as Steve McGregor of Lochwinnoch and Doris Humphries of Castleford.

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.



This monument was placed in Castleford by the Renfrew Historical Society in 1991 to indicate the beginning of the famed Opeongo Road, from the Ottawa River to the interior of Renfrew County.

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 and the land meet as one.

Castleford was founded by Lt. Christopher Bell, a British naval officer, in 1827, when he built a small sawmill along the Bonnechere River and chose the name from his own birthplace in Yorkshire. This year is the 200th anniversary of Lt. Bell's birth.

A number of families soon settled in the area. The Humphries,

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 to Castleford



Doris Humphries chronicled the history of Horton Township.



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 along the River Road.

Steve McGregor's grandmother got the second biggest fright of her life in 1870, when the first train rolled past. She thought it was the Fenians, Irish-American invaders who launched raids on British North America.

"And so when she heard this first train coming up, she thought it was the Fenians coming, because they were coming across the border and frightening a lot of people in Canada."

As for the greatest fright of her life, that would be the famed 1865 fire that swept through the area, missing the McGregor home by just a few feet.

Meanwhile, McGregor recalls as a teenager driving the horse cutter to Arnprior with his mother to deliver three cases (45 dozen) of eggs.

"The horse got a fright of the train one day, going down through Sand Point and it upset the cutter, and it put the two of us out into the middle of the road. And I was able to pull the horse into the snowbank and stop."

Although no one was hurt, they lost most of the eggs. "There was only about five dozen survived. That was all we got paid for," he said. "All the rest were scrambled eggs."