

HISTORY OF CANNIFTON AND COMMUNITY

Bibliography

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CANNIFTON is in the Township of Thurlow, Hastings County. It is situated on the Moira River about 3 miles from the city of Belleville on the No. 37 Highway.

During the year 1789, Thurlow received an acquisition to its settlement by the arrival of a party of about 50 refugee loyalists who had been compelled to leave their homes in the U.S., because of persecution by triumphant insurgents. They were seeking protection under the British flag, and reached Thurlow by way of the Bay of Quinte. Two years earlier, according to the oldest map in the Crown Lands Department had been surveyed and marked out in concessions. Some of the party moved up the river and settled in the fifth concession. These included William Reed and his 4 sons. Reed began the first flouring mill which was taken over some years later by Henry Corby.

Among the early settlers who came a few years later were Richard Cannif and Robert Thompson.

In the old records of the Township of Thurlow there is a report that, at the annual Town meeting, held on the 5th of March 1798, Daniel Cannif was one of those chosen as a town officer.

Cannifton was first settled about 1806 by the family of John Cannif from whom the village derives its name. John Cannif was a loyalist, born in what is now known as New York in the year 1756. He came to Canada in 1788, first settling in Adolphustown until he moved to Thurlow.

Until the year 1806 the way from Myer's mill in Belleville, up the river to where Corby's mill now stands four miles distant was unbroken by a single clearing. There was a poor wagon road, cut by the only 2 men who could afford the comfort of a wagon. This followed the old Indian trail. In that year John Cannif bought 800 acres of land from these 2 men, McDougall and Carle, on the 3rd concession. He commenced the work of clearing and this is the present site of Cannifton.

In the year 1812 he erected a flouring mill upon the fine water privileges of the Moira at this point. The river bears the name of the Earl of Moira, afterwards the Marquis of Hastings. Sagonaska is the river's original Indian name. Cannif had made for his mill a millstone made on the spot of hard granite, which may be seen still on the site, where a flourishing flour and saw mill still operates.

The surrounding district was still an interminable wilderness when John's son, James began clearing land between his father's place and Myer's mill. This gave encouragement to others to begin moving up river. The progress of the village was slow for some years, probably due to the proximity of the rising town of Belleville, which eventually became the county seat and nearest bank location.