

THE DANFORTH TRAIL

The present Highway 33 from Carrying Place through Consecon, Hillier, Wellington, Bloomfield and Picton to Glenora follows in nearly its entire length the original trail blazed by Asa Danforth. It was the first major road built in the county.

The original settlers used roads very little. Travel was mainly by water, on the Bay of Quinte, on the lakes and streams, or on foot following paths. Roads developed late and were very poor. A road allowance had been left along the waterfront, but the waterfront was often irregular, low and difficult to make into a road. So, in practice, trails were blazed back from the water cutting through lots from cabin to cabin along the shortest or easiest path. When these trails became roads they followed around hills, along the banks of streams or along old Indian trails. Sharp curves were of no concern to settlers on horse-back or on snowshoes. So roads meandered from farmhouse to farmhouse, cutting across lots with no apparent reason other than to get to the next settlement.

Another reason for poor roads was because of the granting of land to the church and Crown. In the original surveys the Crown reserved the fifth, fifteenth and twentieth lots in the first concession; the fourth, eleventh, twenty-first and twenty-third in the second concession. The clergy reserved the third, tenth, seventeenth and twenty-second in the first concession; and the second, ninth and sixteenth in the second concession. This meant that much land was unused and unimproved; roads across these lots had to be built by settlers on adjacent lots, which meant they usually didn't get built. As the population increased, settlement moved inland. The need for roads increased.

When John Graves Simcoe was appointed lieutenant-governor of Upper Canada in 1791, one of his main concerns was the building of roads. In 1798 a contract was awarded Asa Danforth, an American surveyor, to construct a road along the front of Lake Ontario, from York to Kingston. The contract called for a road to be opened and cleared throughout, 33 feet in width, half of which had to be cut smooth and level with the ground. Bridges were to be constructed over watercourses, and steep descents made gradual. For all this work the contractor was to receive about \$90.00 a mile.

The work took three years to complete and would have taken much longer if he had encountered primeval forest all the way. The stretch from Kingston to the Carrying Place was settled by Loyalists, and existing trails only had to be joined up and improved. By 1801 Danforth had completed the road from York to Kingston. It was little more than a swath through the forest in most places. Even in its best section it was little better than a blazed trail. The course of the road was marked by red cedar mile posts. It passed through Carrying Place, Consecon, Wellington, Bloomfield and Hallowell (Picton), then followed the shore to Stone Mills (Glenora).

While the Danforth Road may not have been much, it was a beginning and time has shown that the road was invaluable. It became Highway 2 from Toronto to Trenton and Highway 33 through the county and along the bay to Kingston.