

## COLONIZATION ROADS

1876

Early in the nineteenth century, grants were made by the Government for the purpose of road building. The main purpose being to bring more settlers to the unchartered lands of Northern Ontario.

Among these roads were the familiar ones in our Township and the adjoining areas, such as the Rosseau-Nippissing road and the Great North Road through Dunchurch from Parry Sound - our governing district. The Great North Road had several villages and towns built along its route in the ensuing years and now is a two lane highway, with much talk of a four lane which has been surveyed recently.

This Great North Road was most certainly a road of extreme importance. After 1866 the road builders started to look North and East, for in this direction lay some of the greatest stands of pine, birch and the maple, which was good for producing sugar and table syrup in the spring when the sap is going up. This was a real delicacy to the new settlers.

The flats were found best for agricultural purposes as much of this country was rocky and in later years bush fires ran wild and more rocks were in evidence. These acres started to grow wild blueberries in abundance, also uncultivated raspberries, which the settlers picked and canned for winter use as desserts.

By 1870 the new road was built reaching out and up through McKellar and Hagerman, on into Croft Township, where Ahmic Harbour is located on the shore of Ahmic Lake. Here was the link for the people of Dunchurch to get their mail and supplies by boat from the railroad at Burks Falls during the open water season. This vital link opened up the most beautiful country in the North. Other bush trails and roads led from this to Maple Island and White-stone. Another went to Glenila and Golden Valley. These settlers had to carry their mail a distance of about eighteen miles between points.

One particular family who made their way from Parry Sound to Spence, via stage, before the boat was in operation, wrote in a personal letter on December 5th, 1876, as follows: "as I write the snow is falling, the maples look very magically erect. I hope the children will learn to appreciate the beauty of their new home, to call it a spot of Heaven on earth I do not think could be misconstrued as sanctimonious. The stately maples, now bare, are forced to take second place to the tall kingly pines, whose aroma is ever stimulating. I am sure your health would improve if you were here with us.

We have been here nearly two months now, but if I live to be a hundred I shall never forget the array of colour that greeted us on our trip. Indeed, I have seen many masterpieces painted by famous artists, but God is the greatest artist of them all. He has spared not one colour in His vast repertoire.

I said in the beginning that the maples had to take second place to the pine, but this was not the case when we arrived, for the maples had been touched by frost and the leaves had taken on different colours, from gold to blood red and all the possible and perhaps impossible shades in between.

These stately trees reach their branches over the road as if to have a more personal contact with their neighbours across the way. To ride or walk this avenue of colour makes one feel as if their life is receiving additional blessing from the Almighty."