

Around 1815 the Napoleonic Wars in Europe were over, and the economy there was in a poor state. This led to an influx to Canada of British immigrants, and several settled in this area. Lawrence Raile is supposed to have been the first British settler, - and Railton is named for him. The Loyalists who came were skilled axemen, but the British pioneers had to learn all the basic skills of felling trees and clearing land. One report said that in 1819 the English Squires Rutledge, Sloat, Wood, Blake, Purdy, Simpkins, Sills, and MacMillan, together owned the only wagon in Loughborough, and that it was a much-repaired treasure !! In another account it was said that Lawrence Sills owned the only wagon at that time, - which goes to underline how much everyone was dependent on each other for survival.

1790-1860:Population

By 1860, some seventy years after the first land grant in Sydenham, there was a prosperous community in the village, of 2500 people. From 1860 on, there was a gradual decline in population, and it was not until 1972 that it reached 2500 again. Now in 1991 the population is about double that number.

Schools

Along with settlement came the need for education and schools. The first schoolmaster in Loughborough was George Rutledge from Ireland. He came in 1819 with a wife and three children -- one having been born on the journey. Rutledge had a First Class teaching certificate and he began teaching right away. He started with 11 pupils but this number soon increased to 43. His first school was a log shanty near Moon's Corners. A report of the Midland District in 1839, shows only three teachers in Loughborough, - - John Walsh at Railton, Absolom Hornbeck at the school on the Rutledge property, and Lucinda Clark at Loughborough West (at Moon's Corners). Obviously George Rutledge was no longer teaching at that time, but in 1844 he was supervising 10 schools. Free education did not come for six more years. Rutledge laid the foundation for the first school system and battled hard for free education for all. Sydenham High School was opened in 1873. Rutledge did not live to see the High School's completion, but he was no doubt gratified by this next phase in education locally.

Churches

The first church building in the Township was a Methodist Chapel on a hill near the present-day Rendezvous Farms. This Chapel served many groups including the Mormons. The tide of Irish immigrants made its impact, and the Catholic Church bought a six-acre lot from Lawrence Raile in 1832 on which to build their church in Railton. St. Paul's Anglican Church in Sydenham was built not much later using money from the Clergy Reserve Funds in Toronto. The first St. Paul's was located on a hill near the present cemetery. About 1912, the C.N. Railway wanted that land for their right-of-way, and so the church was rebuilt on its present site in the village.