

OUR TOWNSHIP

The first roads that had been opened up in East Zorra section of the Township were 12th line and the 16th line, so first lots were taken up along these.

With the coming of the Canada Company and the opening of the Queen's Bush country, steps were taken to open a road connecting Woodstock with Stratford and Goderich.

In 1849 the Woodstock and Huron Road Company was formed which made the 12th line a good plank and gravel road. They erected toll gates at the corner now occupied by Toll Gate School, near Woodstock where tolls were collected on buggies, democrats, wagons to help pay for the road. Elderly people can remember paying 7¢ for a buggy passing through the gates.

At this time there were in East Zorra three saw mills, a grist mill, an oatmeal mill and a mill for carding wool.

In East Zorra agriculture centered around cattle, horses, sheep, hogs, fall and spring wheat, barley, oats, peas, turnips, potatoes, carrots, mangelwurzel, butter, cheese, rye, Indian corn, buckwheat. Horses and cows and sheep were brought to Lower Canada from France as early as 1665. Settlers in Upper Canada got their stock from Lower Canada or the United States.

In 1850 in East Zorra there were 587 horses, 1930 hogs, around 4,000 cattle, 4898 sheep. Nearly 2000 yards of fulled cloth and 5724 yards of flannel were made in the township that year. Fifty-nine thousand and ninety-eight pounds of maple sugar was produced.

The name of Zorra can claim no ties with English, Scotch, Irish, American or German settlers, some say that this name comes from the Bible in Judges XIII, 2-- Zorah, the birthplace of Samson. Others claim that the name Zorra is Spanish. An early Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada, Sir Peregrine Maitland, 1818-1828, saw service in Spain under Wellington. It is presumed that he would have some say in naming new townships and he may have compared the country to a female fox which is what the name means in Spanish. How could the broad acres be as deceiving as a female fox? Or could he be referring to a Zoril which is an animal in Africa which belongs to the family of mammals which also included weasels, badgers, otters, mink and skunk--all of which were undoubtedly seen by the early surveyors.

As we drive along the well gravelled roads of East Zorra, today, and view the modern homes, electrically equipped, the well kept lawns, the comfortable attractive schools and churches, the cultivated fields all fenced in, we can scarcely realize that in 1840 this beautiful township was nothing but dense forest through which animals roamed. The path of men being a blazed path through the forest.