

Early Settlement of our Townships & Village



Early Settlement of the Village of Paisley

The village "Paisley" bears the name of a town in Renfrewshire, Scotland.

Mr. Simon Orchard learned of the superior quality of the land "down the river" and decided to try his fortune in that direction. So in April 1851 he moved his family from the township of Egremont to Walkerton and with the help of a hired man he made a raft of cedar logs and with his family and household effects started down the Saugeen River. The same night they arrived at the mouth of "Mud River" (as Saugeen was then called) and when morning came they were so pleased with the location that they decided to go no further.

Mr. Rowe (a friend of the Orchard family) was delayed in following Mr. Orchard due to the sickness and death of his son. However on the 9th of May they started down the river with two rafts and landed in early afternoon at the site now known as Paisley and where the Orchard family was already situated. So we see that Mr. Orchard and Mr. Rowe were responsible for picking the site for which Paisley rapidly grew around. And it's small wonder that Paisley still has two streets named in their honour — "Orchard St." the street running past Jim Millans' home and "Rowe St." — the street running west between the Royal Bank and Mr. Forrester's law office.

Mr. Orchard was very satisfied with his choice on the north side of the Teeswater River as was Mr. Rowe, with his choice on the south side. They each had a good shanty built and had to construct a foot bridge across the river to get back and forth between the two houses. When this was washed away with the rising river they trained their dog to swim back and forth carrying messages and small parcels.

Mr. Orchard's log shanty was later used for a store in which Mr. Samuel Steele was in charge.

The winter of 1851 & 52 was a very severe one. Mr. Orchard had four cows and Mr. Rowe had fourteen head of cattle to winter with nothing to feed them on but tree tops. It started to snow on the 12th of October and all winter there was an average of five feet of snow. However the cattle came through nevertheless. One morning Mr. Orchard's cows went for a drink as usual — stood on the rotten ice which broke beneath them and the cows were never seen again.

In 1852 Mr. Rowe built a tavern and Mr. Valentine got a sawmill running. The development of the village between 1856-57 showed 36 buildings consisting of 3 sawmills — one grist mill — the school house and Rowe's tavern besides the homes of the inhabitants.

The name Paisley was given to the village when the post office was opened February 1, 1856. The first post master was Thomas Orchard. He was also the first merchant building the first store in Paisley.

Mr. Thomas Irving was in those days a most essential part of the community. His little work shop on the bank overlooking Starks Mill was a curiosity shop in which everything from a broken down printing press to an old gun or a sick watch was benefitted by his treatment.

The hum of industry early prevailed the village. Valentine's grist mill was in full swing. The property so long known as the Fisher Mill (now owned by Rudolph Boegtter) was purchased from S. T. Rowe in 1859 by David Hannah and milling was actively carried on. There was a sash and door factory owned by Joe Christie and the Sinclair Brothers — a tannery was started and a blacksmith shop by Joseph Donald — a foundry by James Bradley — a brick yard by William Anstead. So by the time ten years had passed Paisley presented all the appearance of a thriving little village.

The first school was built of flat-ted logs 20 x 24 inside. The contract of the building was let to John McDonald for \$120. Miss Stewart was the first teacher — her wage being \$250 per annum. She began teaching in the new school January 1857 and taught two years. In 1866 the contract was let for building a "new brick" and in July 1867 on a very rainy Monday it was opened. Mr. Saunders was principal until 1869 when he was succeeded by Mr. T. J. Bell who taught until 1872. Attendance had increased considerably so the board called a meeting to decide on a new school and in June the contract was let to Sinclair and Blackburn for \$4600.

When school started they engaged a new staff. In 1888 it was found necessary to build an addition to the school house — all the rooms were made larger — more convenient, and two new rooms were added.

The first locomotive came in on June 7th, 1872 and how the settlers cheered! The road was open for freight and passengers the following August 1872. With railway communication the village grew as never before. It could now offer a good

market with the advantage of a shorter haul.

Population increased — it being 1038 inhabitants so on June 7th, 1873 the village was incorporated. James Saunders was reeve — Duncan Fisher, Alex Colborne, William Smith and Robert Porteous were councillors.

In the fall of 1876 the town hall was built and it was therein that the council held its first meeting on March 20, 1877. December 15th witnessed the installing of an excellent system of waterworks for fire protection — the cost of which was \$6500.

The first minister to hold a public religious service in Paisley was the Rev. James Hutchinson in 1853. It was held in Rowe's tavern — the congregation seated on beer kegs. The first church to be erected was St. Andrew's church by the Presbyterian congregation. It opened in the winter of 1859. Then came the Knox United Church — the Methodist Church — the Church of England and the Baptist.

Bridges was one of importance — the first bridge over the Teeswater River was built by Simon Orchard in 1851. Raes bridge was under construction in 1854. Goldie St. bridge was built in 1859 with Simon Orchard as contractor. Before the bridges were built over the Saugeen scows were used to transport the traffic.

The press has been represented in Paisley since February 7th, 1865 — the date of the first issue of the Paisley Advocate. The first publisher was Richard Goldie. It passed through a few hands before D. McKenzie took over and he is now our Sr. Editor.

Canadian Bank of Commerce opened a bank in Paisley in 1875 but closed in 1877. Robert Porteous opened a private bank. It continued until Mr. Porteous died in 1896. The western bank of Canada established a bank in 1886 with C. L. Rennie as agent.

The first doctor to reside in Paisley was Dr. Crawford. Other medical men were Dr. John Bard, Dr. S. McArton and Dr. P. McLaren.

For twenty eight years George Malloch was the only lawyer in the village.

Some who deserve mention in the Early History of Paisley are — Simon Orchard, S. T. Rowe, John Valentine, James Stark and Duncan Fisher.

