



Early Settlement of the Township of Saugeen

"Saugeen" is an Indian word — "Chippeway Sajin" meaning "mouth of the River."

In proportion to this township's acreage it has more inferior land than any township south of the peninsula. There are many acres of drift sand in the north and its whole length is cut through by a creek. Then the railroad and Saugeen River combine to pull down the acreage. However there are a number of fine homes in Saugeen that compare favorably with any in the county. There are some sections of stiff clay and the land is very rough along the river. It is the smallest township in the county.

The survey of Saugeen township started in April 22, 1851 (with "A. Vidal" conducting the survey party) and ended August 22nd, 1851 exactly four months after starting.

It was around Southampton and Port Elgin that the first settlements were made. "Alexander Wallace" received the distinction of being the first to settle in the township.

While the snow was still on the ground in the spring of 1851 Mr. Wallace left Owen Sound drawing after him a toboggan on which was piled his household effects — his wife laden with bundles accompanying him. Reaching the Indian village Mrs. Wallace remained, a guest of Mrs. Cathy (wife of the teacher and missionary at the Indian village) while her husband went on in search of a desirable spot on which to locate. Having found one to his liking he proceeded at once to erect a log shanty. Mrs. Wallace, anxious to assist her husband left Cathy's and sought her husband's shanty. Only the walls were built with no doors or windows yet made so she entered her new home by climbing over the top of the log wall. From that time on she remained with her husband roughing it in the bush and nobly doing her part to make a home in the wilderness. And then the women of this day and age complain! This much esteemed lady passed away February 12, 1906 having survived her husband some 13 years.

The following are some of the pioneers of Saugeen who settled in the township in 1851 — Alexander and John Wallace, William and David Kennedy, Thomas Burgess, John and Jacob Atkinson, Archibald Armstrong, William Gowanlock, James Rowand, Thomas Turner, Neil Bell,

John King, Archibald Pollock and Robert Craig.

The majority of these men found their way to their new homes in the bush by way of the River Saugeen — either on rafts or roughly constructed scows. It was a dangerous experience and many mishaps occurred. It was indeed with a feeling of thankfulness that the passengers reached their destination and stepped ashore.

The number of settlers increased the following years, many of whom were Germans who as a rule were pretty well to do. Most of them came from Waterloo county.

The lands of Saugeen were among those classed as "School Lands" and as such were opened for sale July 30, 1852 at the price of two dollars an acre.

The first election was held in January 1854 — the polling place being at "Belcher's tavern" in Southampton. Alex McNab was the first reeve. The first expenditure made by the government towards opening roads in Saugeen was in 1852 when that part of the Elora Road which lies north of Burgoyne was opened. In 1865 the Elora and Goderich roads were gravelled giving the east and west sides of the township excellent roads.

Saugeen and Brant townships were the two townships in the county that were most burdened with the expense of constructing and maintaining large bridges, due to the fact that the course of the Saugeen River lies through the whole length of the townships. The bridges had to be stretched across its waters as well as good sized tributaries. The first cost of constructing the bridges was large and then an annual charge to keep them in repair.

The settlers who took up land in Saugeen township were of "good stock" maintaining the good name and reputation of the township.

Charter Member World W.I.



Mrs. James West of Kemble, who is one of five world charter members of the Women's Institute, which is celebrating the 60th anniversary of its founding this month. The first branch was organized in Ontario at Stony Creek by Mrs. Adelaide Hoodless in February 1897 and the third in Kemble by Mrs. James Gardiner in September of the same year. Mrs. West, who is 94, and is still living on the home farm at Kemble was a charter member and later president of the branch. Since then the organization has spread around the world, the Associated Countrywomen of the World. — Sun-Times Staff Photo.

