

Township of West Oxford

Early Beginnings

This area was first named "Oxford Upon the Thames" and included originally the townships of East and North Oxford. We believe East Oxford was detached between 1820-22. We know that North Oxford was detached in 1842 and the town of Ingersoll on Jan. 1, 1852.

The township of West Oxford is triangular in shape and is entirely surrounded by other townships in Oxford County, with the exception of about one mile of road at the Southwest corner of West Oxford which separates it from the county of Middlesex.

Before the earliest settlement of white immigrants the Atiwandaronk Indians lived along Lake Erie and in this area. They were called the Neutrals by the other tribes. The river, now called the Thames, wandered through the valley with lush rolling wooded hills on either side. The Indians called the river "Many Antlered." Their homes were long huts covered with bark and skins with several families living in one hut. They cleared the land nearby to grow pumpkin, corn, squash, gourds and tobacco. When the land became infertile the whole village moved on to a new site.

The first governor of Upper Canada was Colonel John Graves Simcoe. He issued a proclamation offering a township to those in the United States who were United Empire Loyalists and who would come to Canada and provide forty families. Each permanent settler was to have two hundred or more acres at six pence per acre. Major Ingersoll made application for such a township. Accompanied by Chief Brant of the Six

Nations Indians in New York State and a group of experienced hunters, he explored lands west of the Grand River and chose the section which later became East, West and North Oxford.

In 1793 a surveyor, Augustus Jones, partially surveyed the area. A large grant of 66,000 acres of land was made to Major Thomas Ingersoll on condition that he build a thirty mile strip of road from Burford to Ingersoll. This work consisted mostly of widening the Indian Trail (later called the Old Stage Road), but it took him until 1795 to finish this job at a cost of \$50,000.

The opening of the road brought in many settlers, who settled mainly along the Broken Front, and the first and second concessions of the township. The surnames of known settlers before 1800 were Beach, Brink, Burtch, Burdick, Carroll, Canfield, Cook, Crawford, Choate, Dickson, Dodge, Dygert, Edwards, Harris, Ingersoll, Karn, Mabee, Nichols, Sage, Scott and Topping.

In 1799 the Oxford settlers actually produced more grain than they needed for their own consumption, and sold most of the surplus corn and wheat to the North West Fur company. The company transported their purchases by way of a wagon road which now extended to Fort Detroit and from that point it was shipped by company boats to the Sault.

According to the Oxford Gazetteer by Thomas S. Shenston "Oxford on the Thames" may justly be called the first settlement of the county for it was the nucleus around which the entire county was settled. In the 1800 census there were 64 names listed as