

# Kilns prominent in area architecture

Most of what is now southern Ontario was forested as late as 1825. Settlements which stood on rivers, the roadways of the 19th century, were beginning to grow as the area attracted farmers, shopkeepers and craftsmen.

Some of these towns grew into cities and others into local centres of business. Townships and hamlets were the locales for many an Ontario family, many of whom remained for generations. Living and dying within a small area, families sank deep roots into a land with such a short history of European settlement.

Villages and hamlets which once dotted southern Ontario are often little more than fading signs and isolated churches today.

By BRAD REAUME

The Hidden Valley of Halton was originally named Fountain Green when it was founded by the Clendenning family in 1840.

The Clennings bought the land from two pioneers, Hull and Meredith, when it was known only by lot and concession numbers. The valley nestles among

high walls of limestone south of Highway 7 between Acton and Georgetown on Fifth Line Esquering.

In 1857, a year after a main line section of the Grand Trunk Railway was laid through the village, the first post office was set up by postmaster John Newton. Fountain Green changed its name to Limehouse.

Deviations in the road layout both north and south of town made it difficult for passersby to find their way out of the village. Stories have been told about travellers who journey through Limehouse only to make a wrong turn and find themselves back in the village.

Now Limehouse is a pleasant hamlet, off the beaten track. Once upon a time, however, it was a bustling community with quarries, lime kilns, a sawmill, wool mill, paint factory, workshops, stores and hotels. It was the railroad which started the boom.

Two rival companies used the proximity of the rail line to estab-

lish businesses in Limehouse, where limestone was plentiful. Bescoby and Worthington, and Lindsay and Farquhar, both established lime kilns to process the rock from nearby quarries.

Credit Valley Sandstone was the trade name for limestone rock from the Limehouse region. Os- goode Hall and Kingsway Catholic Church in Toronto, and the Basilica in Hamilton were in large part fashioned from Credit Valley Sandstone. The last firing of the kilns took place in Limehouse in 1915, though it continued until 1931 in nearby vil- lages.

The quarries changed hands often until eventually in 1927 Gypsum Lime and Alabastine Company of Paris, Ont. bought them from Toronto Line Company, who had purchased them from Gowdy and Moore, who had taken over from Bescoby and Worthington. The Paris-based company shut them down upon purchase.

Limestone formations are

usually a spelunker's (cave explorer's) dream and the Limehouse area is no exception to that. Limestone rock is subject to a natural chemical reaction of its lime carbonate and rain water. The water eats into the rock and carries it away, leaving caves. As long as water can run off, a net- work of caves can form and in- crease in size.

Caves are a natural for smug- glers and those caves around Limehouse are no exception. Local legends refer to bootleggers and whiskey stills in the caverns. The theft of anything could be concealed within them. There even remains the rumor of a murder, long ago, in the caves near Jones Creek.

Early settlers would collect all the downed timber from as much as half an acre of land and place a frame containing crushed lime- stone on top of all the wood. The wood pile was then fired and al- lowed to burn all night. In the morning the blaze would be gone but the wood would burn slowly

for a week, when the lime would be ready to collect.

After a 'burning,' about 100 bushels of lime would be avail- able to plaster or chink log houses. One burning would pro- vide enough lime for two small houses. Placing the lime between the logs plugged the drafts. This was a common practice if lime- stone was available. It may have been the reason Limehouse was settled at all.

The first burial in Limehouse was indicative of the tough pioneer days. Mary Snyder, 3, died of exposure after wandering into the woods and becoming lost.

The Nickell family settled in Limehouse in 1819 and built their home high on a hill overlooking the valley. The home soon be- came known as the "Beacon Light." None of the Gowdy fam- ily lives in Limehouse now, after being so involved in the lime business, but Douglas M. Gowdy, a Limehouse boy, became the manager of Maclean- Hunter Publications.



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