

Historical society

Surveyor explains road design

By Olga Darcovich
 Travellers in Halton soon discover Halton roads take mysterious jogs, zigs and zags. The mystery was explained last week by surveyor Fred Cunningham in a talk on early surveying in the area. Mr. Cunningham spoke at a meeting of the Milton Historical Society.

When the plans for Halton were laid out in the late 18th Century and early 19th Century, surveying lacked the precision it enjoys today. Mistakes were inevitable and those that were made were allowed to remain, Mr. Cunningham told the group.

Highway 5, the first road to be built in the area, was located where it is to be safe from invasions and marauding parties coming across Lake Ontario. The road, built in 1793, extended from Toronto to Dundas and then angled off to Sarnia and Windsor.

As well as serving a military purpose, Dundas St., as it was then called, was designed as the base from which future farms would be laid out.

The first concessions to be surveyed were laid out in long narrow lots, following the pattern set by settlements along the St. Lawrence River, but also for safety. In the event of attack people would be close to their neighbors, the surveyor explained.

A concession is a strip of land a mile and a quarter in depth, he said. South of Lower Base Line the strips run east and west; north of Base Line they run north and south.

The land was laid out in 200-acre parcels, which in turn were divided into 100-acre lots, each fronting on a road. The first lots were 1,320 feet wide; later ones 2,000 feet wide. Every five lots, 66 feet were left for a cross road. Stakes were driven to indicate the measurement.

When the surveyors got to the end of the township, they let the last lot absorb any errors in measurement made along the way. The person who got the last lot got either more or less than the 100 acres he was supposed to get, Mr. Cunningham reported.

Often roads were built by farmers performing labor in lieu of paying taxes. The stakes were driven only on the north side of the east-west roads. As a result the end of one part of a north-south road, such as Third Line and Fourth Line, sometimes didn't match up with the beginning of the next portion. The jogs in these roads persist to this day.

Similarly, when the concessions north of Lower Base Line were being laid out the surveyors started from the south, worked their way up to Steeles Ave. (then known as Upper Base Line), across Steeles, then headed south again, this time taking their first measurement from Steeles. "The consequence was that a jog was required to connect the east-west roads in the northern part of the region.

Acknowledging the errors, a survey act was passed calling for these east-west roads to be connected by a jog located at a point midway between the north-south roads.

To prevent anyone getting less than his fair share of 100 acres surveys in the north of the region, which were done in 1819, were deliberately laid out in large lots, Mr. Cunningham said.

Someone once complained to Mr. Cunningham that there wasn't a right angle anywhere in Halton. Mr. Cunningham conceded the man was probably right.

Dundas St. was laid out to be parallel to a straight line drawn from Hamilton Harbor

to the mouth of the Humber River. With the instruments the early surveyors had to use, they couldn't make the north-south roads perpendicular to Highway 5. Instead, they were forced to make the north-south roads run at an angle of 83 degrees to the east-west roads. "Which causes everybody a headache," Mr. Cunningham commented.

Two of the early surveying instruments used were the transit and Gunther's Chain. The transit was a device used to get bearings from the North Star. This was a multi-man operation, Mr. Cunningham said, because blazing pine torches had to be held close by in order for the surveyor to see the scale.

The transit was used cautiously and rarely. If one was broken, it had to be sent to England for repairs, a process that could take a year.

Gunther's Chain was literally a chain made up of 100 lengths of eight-inch iron rods, joined by links. It was a unit of measurement 66 feet long. The 66-foot length was chosen because it related to measurement of latitude.

Anybody could be a surveyor in those days. If someone had a compass, he was made foreman of the road gang, Mr. Cunningham commented.

The early settlers were soldiers. After the War of 1812, soldiers that were here were given land as inducements to stay. Settlement was considered the only protection against future invasion.



SURVEYOR Fred Cunningham describes the early methods of surveying which opened up Halton to settlement. On the table is a transit, an early surveying instrument.

Alkerton faces five B/E charges

Edwin Alkerton 48, at no fixed address has been charged with five charges of break and enter in Milton and area, according to Halton Regional Police.

Believed by police to be connected with approximately 15 incidences of break and enter in Halton region during the last year, Alkerton was charged by Halton Police, following his arrest by London city police for impaired driving Sunday, Jan. 8.

Alkerton will appear in court in London to face the five charges involving theft of approximately \$13,000 in stolen goods.

To date, none of the goods have been recovered, said police.

Alkerton is charged with breaking and entering the home of Garry Sterrit, Ninth Line, Milton, at which time he threatened Mr. Sterrit with a hand gun. Following a description of the man by Mr. Sterrit, police issued a warrant for his arrest.

Alkerton is charged with possession of an unregistered restricted weapon and several break and enters in Milton and area including approximately \$7,000 of goods taken from the home of Rev. Duncan McLean, Hornby, on Oct. 21, 1977.

An estimated \$3,000 of silverware and jewellery was taken in a break-in at the home of Henry Holan, First Line, Halton Hills on Oct. 14, 1977.

On Oct. 19, 1977, the home of

—A quit-smoking clinic is being held in Burlington next week, during National Education Week on Smoking.

Howard Bailey was broken into, with an estimated \$1,500 of goods taken.

Approximately \$1,000 of goods were stolen from the home of Earl Near, 1549 Lower Base Line Rd. on Dec. 27, 1977.

The majority of stolen articles included jewellery, silverware and television sets, stated Sgt. Keith Robertson, senior detective of the Crime Investigation Branch of Halton Region Police.

Alkerton will also face similar charges for break and enter in Burlington, Oakville and London, said Sgt. Robertson, but added Alkerton will attend court in London for all charges.

No court date has been set.

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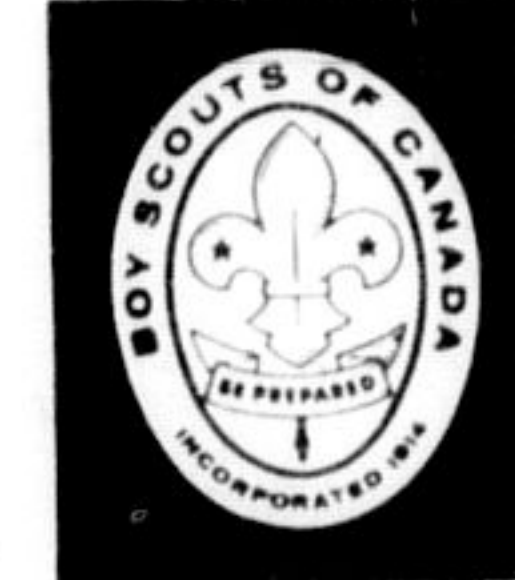
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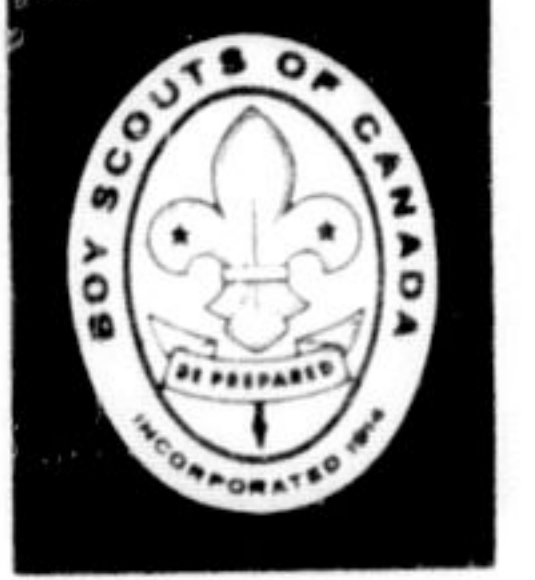


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