

From our files

Timber was important export in the early days

Timber formed one of Oakville's most important exports in the early days.

In forests of the district grew huge oak trees and pines, some of the latter as

high as two hundred feet, the lower half clear of branches. White pine,

which was most in demand for mercantile purposes, comprised nearly two-thirds of all the timber marketed, white oak being best adapted for shipbuilding and heavy construction.

The timber was cut in winter. When the trees had been felled, the branches removed the logs were squared. They were then drawn to the top of the banks of the Sixteen Mile Creek and rolled down to the water's edge, where they were either loaded onto schooners or assembled into huge rafts. These were made by constructing cribs of timber about 6 by 40 feet, upon which other timbers were laid crosswise and secured by chains. As white oak timbers would not float because of their density, enough crossbars of pine were incorporated into the raft to give it buoyancy.

The raft had to be watched closely as it was being towed down the lake by steamer, in order to prevent it from breaking up. For this reason a crew

of raftsmen, usually French-Canadians or Indians, stayed on board the raft, in a small shelter built of slabs. Some of this timber, and lumber from William Chisholm's sawmill and other mills in the area, only went as far as York.

Smaller white oak trees were made into staves for the manufacture of barrels

in England and the United States. Farmers in the rear of the township would cut the staves in the bush in the winter and cord them up on the banks of the Sixteen to await the breakup of the ice. By the time spring came the banks for miles back into the country would be piled with staves. The culls would be thrown out, and

as soon as the floods came the good staves would be thrown into the creek and piloted down to the harbor. A boom kept them from being swept out into the lake.

In those days transient lumberjacks lived in shanties on the creek flats, and would often make the nights noisy with their drinking and fighting.

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Naming Navy Street

so after Oakville was founded.

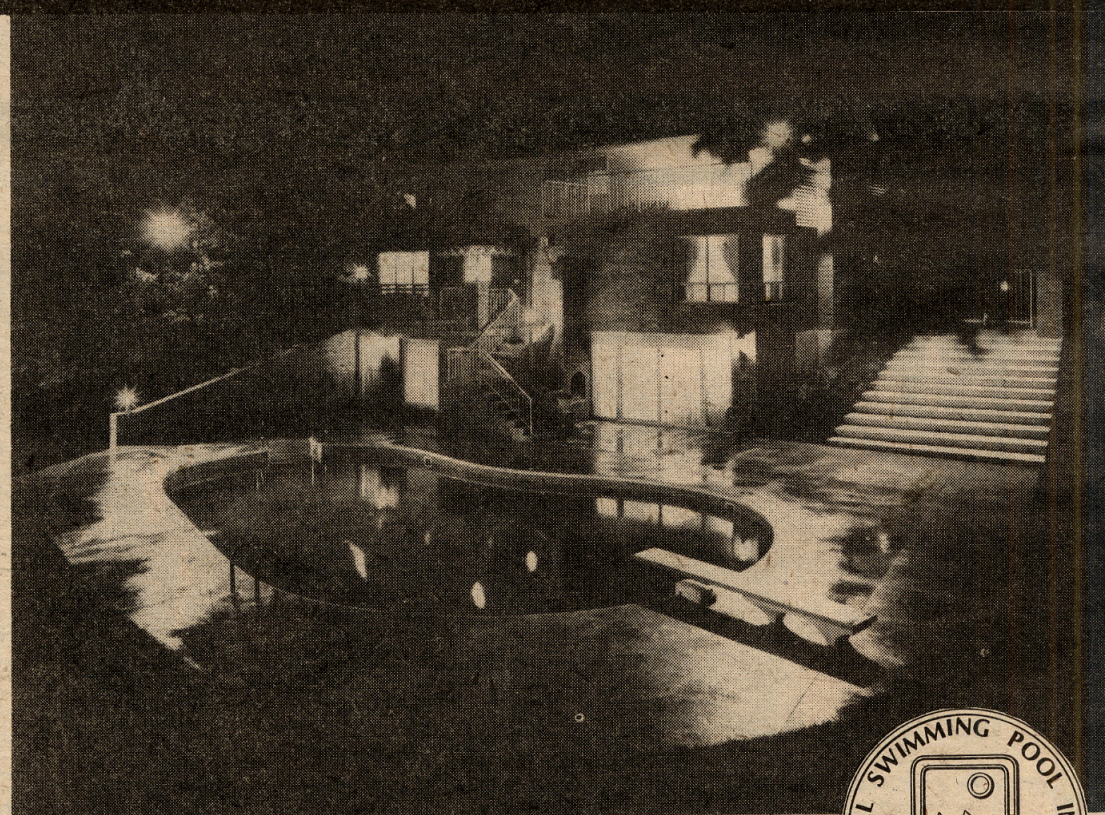
The New Murray Hotel, at the corner of Robinson Street, is the town's second oldest hostelry, with a history that goes back more than a century. On the other side of the street is a small town park, beside the greens of the Oakville Lawn Bowling Club, and at the bottom of the street, on the same side are the beautiful grounds of the former Chisholm Estate, with two fine old brick residences

dating back to the middle of the last century.

How did the street get its distinctive name? It is believed that the person who chose it was influenced by the great admiration which the British navy had aroused at that period, shortly following the Napoleonic wars.

In Oakville's early days, Navy Street was a business thoroughfare. With the coming of the railway and the subsequent decline of the port, business moved to Colborne Street (now Lakeshore Road).

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