

Talbot Street, Looking East, Straffordville, Ontario.



BUCKBERROUGHS

BLACKSMITH  
SHOP

BILL  
LIPSIT  
HOUSE

LYLE  
WALSH  
STORE



HOTEL

CHAS  
CASWELL  
TIN & HARDWARE  
SHOP

W. JONES  
STORE

Plank Road  
Straffordville, Ont.



BILL  
LIPSIT

WM  
HOWEY

MORRIS

HUNT CLUB

BILL  
CHUTE

DAVID  
FABEL

STRAFFORDVILLE



HOTEL

CHAS  
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BILL  
LIPSIT

↑  
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BILL  
CRUTE

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DAVID  
FABEL

STRAFFORDVILLE



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## UNVEIL PLAQUE TO MARK VIENNA SITE OF EDISON HOMESTEAD

A momentous occasion was held at Vienna on Sunday, Sept. 17, 1961, the unveiling of an historical plaque to commemorate the Edison homestead.

The plaque is one of a series being erected throughout the province by the Department of Travel and Publicity, acting on the advice of the Archaeological and Historic Sites Board of Ontario.

John Edison was a resident of Essex County, New Jersey, at the time of the revolution. He and his family remained loyal to the British Crown, and were subsequently forced to flee to Nova Scotia in 1783, where they settled on the Bay of Fundy near Digby.

In 1811 the family moved to Upper Canada where they received a land grant of some 600 acres, along the banks of Otter Creek in what is now Elgin County. The land which was settled by John's son, Samuel Edison, constituted part of the site of a village, known initially as Shewsbury and later as Vienna. Tradition maintains that the change in the name of the village was made at the suggestion of Samuel Edison.

Samuel served in the War of 1812 as a Captain in the First Middlesex Regiment and following his discharge from active service after the capture of Detroit, he returned to Bayham Township where he became one of the most influential and respected men in the area.

One of Samuel's sons, Samuel Jr., ran afoul of the law, however, when he committed himself to active support of the reform movement led by William Lyon Mackenzie; and after taking part in the Rebellion of 1837, he was forced to flee to the United States.

After crossing the international boundary near Sarnia, he roamed through the border states until he settled in Milan, Ohio. There, his wife, who had been left behind in Vienna, joined him, and on February 11, 1847, a son was born to them who was destined to become one of the great men of modern science - Thomas Alva Edison.

Thus, it was only through the political activity of Thomas Edison's father that Vienna lost the honor of being the birthplace of the genius who invented or pioneered in the development of the automatic telegraph, the phonograph, the incandescent lamp, the storage battery and many improved methods of generating and distributing electricity.

As a boy, Thomas Edison visited his grandfather's house which stood on the site occupied by this plaque. The clapboard house which was built in the 1820s was bought in the 1930s by Henry Ford Sr., and it may now be seen at the Ford Greenfield Village Museum in Dearborn, Michigan.

The Vienna Council rushed plans to have the Edison Cemetery improved prior to the day of the event.

The part played by pioneer Captain Samuel Edison in the early history of Vienna was commemorated on Sunday when a plaque was unveiled marking the site of his original home. Assisting were Vienna Reeve K. C. Emerson, Mrs. Nora Coombe and Mrs. Myrtle Jackson of Vienna, who unveiled the plaque, and Vienna Councillor Jerry Seghers, who did much of the work in preparation for the ceremony.



## An 1891 ACCOUNT BOOK AT PORT BURWELL REVIVES MEMORIES OF FORMER ERA

A. N. Wright, who operates a thriving and modern hardware business in Port Burwell retains a solid link with the past. He still carries on business in the store that was built by his father in 1899-1900 and he has in his possession the first account book that his father kept when he took possession of the original store, across the street from the present site, on May 14, 1891.

The account book, written in A. R. Wright's own hand, contains the original inventory of goods in the store, the accounts for each month and other inventories made in 1892 and 1894. This account book and the recollections that it inspires for Mr. Wright give a clear cut picture of what life at the turn of the century was like.

Local history of this sort is becoming more and more difficult to track down. The evident reason is, of course, the thinning ranks of people with personal recollections of the pioneer days in this district but equally important is a lack of enough interest in the local past.

Actually such local records and minute observations of daily living habits provide the key of what life was actually like in that era which numerically is separated from ours by only 60 to 70 years, but scientifically is separated by the impassable gap of automobiles, aeroplanes, two world wars, atomic bombs and sputnik.

To take a look at that distant age is to take a look at a completely different way of life. And yet, that different way of life can be made understandable because there are still many men living who have passed through this entire progression and remember vividly the former era or who retain memories from what their parents told them. One of these is Mr. A. N. Wright. He is a man vitally interested in the present affairs of his community, having served as reeve of Port Burwell for three years, as president of the port Chamber of Commerce and as a member of the Bayham Township Council. But despite these present interests, Mr. Wright finds time to think about the past too.

Alma Richard Wright, his father, was born in 1856, the year that word about the battle of Alma reached North America. Prior to taking up the hardware business in Port Burwell, he had travelled about the country selling tin sets, made by his brother and himself. The five piece tin sets consisted of 14 and 10 quart pails, milk strainer, dipper and cream skimmer and the exorbitant cost of such a set was one dollar.

In 1891 A. R. Wright was selling door to door around Froggett's Corners and stayed over night at the hotel there. The proprietor suggested that he set up a permanent business in Port Burwell and he did. The account book outlines that business.

His son explains that cash receipts outlined in the account book bear very little relationship to the actual situation. Trading was done in kind and the Wright storage cellar was always piled high with farm produce received for goods. "Whitehorses" or "Due-bills" from the local grocery store accounted for another good portion of the business so that although the accounts record a business striving to make receipts match expenditures the actual standard of living was high. The total inventory of the store in 1891 was worth \$228.65; by 1892 it had doubled to \$569.76. And two years later it neared the thousand dollar mark. But the cash balances for many months show the scarcity of hard cash as monthly profits often hovered near the three dollar mark and several times expenditures exceeded cash received.

In 1899 the original business was destroyed by fire as a general blaze destroyed Port Burwell's main street from the bridge across the Otter to the East beach. Some 65 houses and business were destroyed. The next year A. R. Wright moved across the street to his present position, building the south half of the store in 1899 and the north section in 1900. The business made almost everything it sold and covered a great market area from Clear Creek on the east to Grovesend and Calton on the west and Griffin's Corners on the north.