

Comprised Middlesex and Elgin Counties). It is from this time he was appointed Registrar of Deeds and Official Documents. These duties, as well as that of Post Master, were carried out at this office. Much of his political work and Justice of the Peace work was also carried on from this office. Today, this office and the other buildings are extinct, but a monument marks the place where these buildings once stood. To find this location today, one follows the Talbot Road, or better known as the Fingal Road, to the Iona cut off. At the junction of these roads is the spot where these buildings once stood.

BURWELL'S POLITICAL LIFE

Burwell's work was not only confined to that of Civil Engineer. In 1816, he represented Middlesex and Oxford Counties in the Legislative Assembly of Upper Canada from 1816 to 1824. He was elected once again for the Middlesex riding in 1830 and defeated again in 1834 by two Reformers. He represented the District of London for one term starting in 1836 and ending in 1840. During his terms of office he came into conflict with Dr. John Rolph, Dr. Charles Duncomb, and William Lyon McKenzie. Colonel Burwell did not side with the Reformers but remained loyal to the British Crown. He did much to persuade people to his way of thinking and since discouraged them in the Reform movement. Although Burwell did not argue with Rolph's political views, he did not become involved in any conflict.

LODGE MASTER PERFORMS FUNERAL SERVICE

One of the few social activities which people of the Nineteenth Century participated in and which is still a large and important part of our society was the attending of the Masonic Lodge. In 1818 a branch of Lodge No. 30 of the Grand Lodge at Niagara opened in St. Thomas. Colonel Burwell was voted in as Lodge Master with Gilman Wilson as Senior Warden, and Joseph Fields as Junior Warden.

Daniel Rapelje, another active member, had set aside a plot of land 16 rods square, in the Village of St. Thomas, for the purpose of building a Masonic Hall. This land was never used. In 1819, Rapelje's son died, and since there was no established church or Clergyman in the vicinity, Colonel Burwell was so asked to perform the burial service. As Grand Master he was also Worshipful Master and it was within his power to participate in such ceremonial functions. Colonel Burwell probably used the Book of prayers of the Masonic Lodge for the burial service.

PORT BURWELL

One of the many public services that Colonel Burwell was directly responsible for was Port Burwell. In 1830 Burwell surveyed a small community at the mouth of the Otter Creek, giving it his name. At this early time Burwell could see the possibilities of a great fresh water way of which Port Burwell would make an excellent Port of call.

With the assistance of Mr. William Merritt of St. Catherines, Colonel Burwell set to work to or-

ganize the people to build up their harbour with piers, docks, etc. He also pushed campaigns to raise funds to help pay for the Welland Canal. In a letter written by Colonel Burwell to Mr. Merritt, Burwell assures him that the harbour at Port Burwell would be large enough to satisfy the needs of the large cargo steamers of the type which were being built at Chippawa at that time. Burwell also went on to say that Mr. Merritt could expect two million feet of pine timber besides some finer materials of the type used in the furniture industry to be shipped that fall.

Because of Colonel Burwell's vigorous participation in campaigning for funds, the Gazette, a widely read newspaper of that time published a story which slandered Colonel Burwell. The people of that area took this story to heart and Burwell was defeated in the next election.

Throughout the rest of Colonel Burwell's life he kept in contact with and aided in any way he could, the small village of Port Burwell. In 1840 he wrote a letter to the Provincial Government requesting it to purchase the harbour from the townsfolk, and to enlarge the harbour facilities. Much to his disappointment, this wish could't be carried out due to lack of funds.

THE BEGINNING OF THE STEAM ERA

Colonel Burwell had many dreams which would have been of great benefit to the inhabitants of this area. One of these dreams was to see a railway connecting Detroit and Niagara. Burwell,

through his work and surveying, came in contact with many people across the region, and did a great deal of campaigning to get support on his life long dream. In a letter which he wrote to his fellow members of the Ontario Legislature, he expressed his views.

"A committee appointed by a general meeting of the inhabitants of the County of Middlesex, held at St. Thomas on the 20th on the subject of applying to the Legislature by Petition to pass an Act incorporating a Joint Stock Company for constructing a Railroad from the Niagara River in the Township of Beatie, to the River Detroit in the Township of Sandwich. I beg to submit, that although the portion of the county through which the proposed Railway is intended to pass, does not, at the present, possess the wealth necessary to enable the inhabitants to complete a work of such magnitude; the object is, nevertheless, attainable by means of the assistance that will be promptly afforded by the persons resident in the adjoining portions of the United States, who are desirous that the proposed Railway shall form a part of the great Western Communication from New York to the Countries west of Detroit and Lake Michigan, as already made manifest by the proceedings of public meeting on that subject in those countries."

"The flow of emigration to the Westward during the course of the last year has been unusually great; and on account of the shortness of journeying through the neighbourhood of the proposed route, in preference to taking the south side of Lake Erie;

notwithstanding the facilities afforded by the steamers which travel the lakes during the summer months, the conveyance of families by wagons during the period as well as other seasons has been immense, and travelling in that direction will no doubt, increase each succeeding year."

"I beg leave, with great defence, to submit, that no objection but founded in reason, or sound policy, can be raised against a part of the funds to this great work being provided from motives of private interest, by persons not resident within the province. The lasting improvement will be positively and substantially, our own, and carrying it into cannot interfere with any vested rights, or prevent the construction of similar works of enterprise in other portions of the Province. For all experience teaches us the very evident truth, that every public improvement in a country contributes to the general wealth and prosperity of the whole of such a country. The means afforded by the improvement, of constructing lateral ways, crossing the contemplated Railway from the interior of the country to the Harbours of Lake Erie; thereby, creating great additional facilities for sending our surplus products and heavy articles, to the markets of Montreal and Quebec; and, availing ourselves in the conveyance of such products, of the benefits of our own Magnificent Coloneal Works, now in a state of great forwardness, on the River St. Lawrence, would be of productive infinite good to the province."

"In discharging the duties assigned by my constituents, I beg leave most respectfully, to request,

that you will give the proposed measure your consideration and support." *

In this letter of 1836 to Mr. H. Meyer, Colonel Burwell shows the importance of having a railway through this area. In his opinion, the westward influx of persons from both the U. S. A. and Britain, and the local needs of transportation of heavy freight, supplies and equipment provides enough cause to build a railway. He also lays down plans to finance this project.

It was nearly 40 years before enough support was raised to build the proposed Railway. In 1873 the Great Western Company built a loop line from Glencoe through St. Thomas to Niagara Falls. Who knows? Such a line might not have been built until after the nineteen hundreds if it had not been for Burwell's driving ambition back in 1836.

SUMMARY

Although Colonel Burwell was, in my opinion a great man, a workhorse in the community, his "Tory" background placed him at times in an unpopular position. The loss of the 1834 election to the Reformers was foreshadowing the events to come. This was the beginning of the end for Colonel Burwell's Political career and the finish of Colonel Talbot's political power. Although his political life was finished, Burwell was still a benefit to his fellow man. He continued surveying until his death in 1846. Even after his death he assisted the community. In 1871 an Episcopal Church was built out of a fund of

* London Free Press, Miss Gladys Elliott.

money by Burwell and a plot of land ten acres in size was donated by him from his will. Most people of Burwell's generation were mainly concerned in building a home for themselves and scraping enough from the soil to make a living. This was a full time job for 99% of the pioneers of that time. I feel anyone who could do this work and assist his community to the wide extent Colonel Burwell did, must be a great man.

1867

OUR CENTENNIAL YEAR

1967

Yes, this is our birthday, and time has a habit of bringing changes to our country as well as to our lives.

The young must look forward but a few of us are privileged to dwell on our memories. In remembering, this is our 100th birthday, we must remember our forefathers had settled this land and most of the farms had been purchased from the Canada Company, the Clergy Reserve or the Crown and many resold before this era. 1867.

Long before Confederation, most of the log houses had given way to more comfortable homes and fine horses and carriages were a common sight on the toll roads. Counties and townships were surveyed and the Credit Valley Railway, was joining St. Thomas with Toronto. So we must start our narration somewhere near 1867.

Agriculture being our livelihood, let us dwell for a few minutes on the inspiration our fathers have given us.

Agriculture Fairs in Pioneer Days

We salute the pioneer who came, cleared the forest, blazed the first trails, built the first homes, schools, and churches, who sowed and reaped, and as they prospered formed their Agricultural Societies and Fairs, that they might improve their agricultural status.

The year 1854, was a long time ago--103 years were to pass before the Yarmouth and Belmont Agricultural Society was to celebrate its Centennial.

The Yarmouth Society and Belmont Fair were for many years separate organizations, before the official merger in 1921. Our present claim to antiquity was not necessarily based on the age of our local fair but on the age of the older members of our organization.

The Yarmouth Agricultural Society--there is departmental record that in the year 1854, the Yarmouth Township Society existed. The Society had 134 members but appeared to be more interested in maintaining purebred sires than in holding an exhibition or fair. In those days each county had a Society, then township societies were formed. Government grants were paid to the county, who distributed the money to the townships.

Their original purpose was the improvement of livestock,--cattle, sheep, pigs. Success attended them and by about 1860, many Societies began to hold fairs to exhibit fine stock which they had procured. Fair day was Achievement Day--a public demonstration and competition. The exhibits told their story and trade was stimulated. Ideas were exchanged. The fair goers derived much practical benefit as well as having an opportunity to enjoy themselves and meet their friends.

Through the years this has been true and people hold fast to this old institution which links the present to the past.

One of the early newspapers "The Canadian Home Journal " of Thursday, October 5, 1865, relates that the "fall exhibition of the Township of Yarmouth was held in Sparta. The day was delightfully favorable and never before had been seen so large