

Area Bridges and Roads

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THE BRIDGES

The Thames River, flowing between Elgin and Middlesex, was first crossed by a scow or ferry. This was in the early 1860's.

The first bridge was a wooden structure, north-east of the present one. The wooden spiles can still be seen in the river, when the water is low.

The present structure is one of steel and iron, with stone abutments and a wooden floor. This structure was built in 1888 by a construction company from Hamilton. Some of those working on it were Farquhar McRae, Alex Watterworth, and a Mr. Lamb. A tragic part of it's erection was that, when almost completed, the structure gave way, falling to the south-west. D. Mitchell, who was on the top of the span, felt the bridge quiver and leaped into the water, thereby saving his life. Others were thrown into the water. Mr. Lamb was stunned by falling steel and was drowned; and Mr. Watterworth was drowned also. The story was told that Mr. Watterworth was caught by his little finger and so went to a watery grave. Mr. G. Weekes, a Woodgreen blacksmith, heard the crash, hurriedly harnessed his horse, and rushed to the scene of the accident. On his way, he met Dan Mitchell who was hurrying home in his wet clothes to report the tragic affair. The bridge materials were salvaged, and it was re-built. From time to time there has been repairs. The stone abutments were reinforced by cement when new approaches were made. The road in Middlesex was changed to stop flooding, although at times the water floods the near-by farms and goes over the road.

There is likely to be a new bridge over the Thames at the Graham Road in the not-too-distant future, as the Graham Road is to be a new highway linking No.2 and No.3.

WALKER'S BRIDGE

On the Townline, between Dunwich and Aldborough, there has been a crossing. A low-water bridge, of plank, did not prove too satisfactory as the high waters at any time, practically, demolished the bridge. So, after some time, and through the untiring work of the late Ronald Walker, the present steel structure was built in the early 1900's. It still is in very good condition.



The Simpson Bridge in 1958 when a Bailey Bridge was erected to take the place of the approach which was broken when a lumber truck crashed through it.

New Bridge over Thames

The Simpson's bridge spanning the Thames River was located on the Graham Road about four miles north of West Lorne.

The Graham Road linking Highways 2 and 3 became known as Highway 76.

In 1962 a new bridge was built replacing the one-lane Simpson's bridge. The new span is located southwest of the old bridge. This has permitted the construction of a new road base on the farm of George Nethercott. Many of the dangerous curves in the old unpaved road have been eliminated and the roadway is paved.

INDIANS OF WESTERN ONTARIO IN THE 1600's AND NOW

The Attawanderon or Neutral Indians -

MOTTO:- "He who knows only his own generation remains
always a child."

If we want to make a complete record - who doesn't? - of the history of our country and community, then the story of the Indians who inhabited the land before the coming of the white man is very important, and should form the basis of our Tweedsmuir History.

What knowledge we have of the Redman's history is very meagre.

We have become so accustomed to relying on the testimony of a written document that we fail to pay attention to the tracings upon the surface of the earth left by early man:-

The campsite, where the ancient Indian warmed himself and cooked his food, casting into the fire the portions he could not eat - from the fire-pit, archaeologists can reconstruct the story of the men who dug and used it;

The findings of the earthen pottery, the chipped arrowheads, the stone pipes, the bone awls and other relics found in and around these ashes - from these findings we can learn what the Redman ate, of what material he made his clothing, the trinkets he used for adornment, and the weapons he used.

Surrounding the city of London, within a radius of 60 miles, Wilfred Jury and his helpers have excavated 22 Indian Campsites. Relics are on display at Western University.

These Neutral Indians (Attawanderons) were in possession of the lands we now call Western Ontario in the early 1600's. Their tribes controlled the lands on both sides of the Niagara River to Lake Ontario

as far as Burlington, the whole Canadian shore of Lake Erie, and from Chatham across to Lake Huron and as far north as Goderich. They were called Neutrals by the French because of their neutrality between warring tribes of the fierce Iroquois, who controlled the Detroit River area and across to Lake Michigan, as well as southeast of Lake Ontario and the nation of Huron to the north.

To Etienne Brule belongs the credit of being the first white man to enter the Attawanderon territory. He was one of Champlain's adventurers in 1619. He wrote, "This country is very beautiful, criss-crossed by brooks and rivers." It is to the Missionary Fathers of the Roman Catholic Church that we are indebted for a great deal of the information we possess regarding the Attawanderons.

In 1640, Father Brebeuf mastered the Attawanderon vocabulary. Father Chaumont recorded 40 villages with a population of 12,000 souls. He wrote that the Neutrals were physically the finest body of men he had seen anywhere. They grew squash, corn, tobacco, beans and other vegetables, cultivating the soil with spears made of flint, large clam shells, and the shoulder blade bones of animals they had killed for food. He recorded that the streams were teeming with fish, and game animals were so plentiful. In 1650, the war between the Mohawks of the Iroquois and the Neutrals began. In 1651, their country was desolate, the Iroquois taking over as they were much stronger. Pauline Johnston, a Mohawk princess, pays tribute to Attawanderon Indians in some of her poems.

We didn't hear of any settlement until in the early 1800's the Chippewas settled in Middlesex. Tecumseh was of this tribe. In 1819 they settled in the neighbourhood of London. In 1851, they owned 9000 acres in the Caradox district.

The Muncey group originated from Pennsylvania. The Muncseys,

Who joined the Chippewas, were affiliated with the Delawares, who migrated to Canada around 1800, and arrived in this district in 1819 - 1824.

Another tribe was the Oneidas. They sold their land in what is now New York State for the sum of \$15,000.00, and bought 5,000 acres in what is Delaware Township in Middlesex County.

"Hiawatha" of Longfellow's poem was of the Iroquois tribe.

These verses written by Mohawk princess Pauline Johnston in the 19th century seem to fit the sad end of the fine-looking, clever and peace-loving Indian of the Attawanderon Nation:

"There's a Spirit on the river; there's a Ghost upon the shore;
They are chanting, they are singing, through the starlight evermore,
As they steal amid the silence and the shadow on the shore.
You can hear them when the northern candles light the northern sky,
Those pale uncertain candle flames that shiver, dart and die,
Those Redmen's icy fingertips, athwart the northern sky.
There's a Spirit on the river; there's a Ghost upon the shore,
And they sing of love and living through the starlight evermore."

NOTE: For material of this programme, I am indebted to Prof. Wilfred Jury, Curator, Museum of Archaeology; Indian Division, U.W.O.; and the National Film Board.

Films for Women's Institute's Historical Research by Mrs. Harmon Morton, Ailsa Craig, Convener London Convention Area.

Film - "The Long House People" are the Iroquois near Brantford, Ontario.

Roads

142.

The first Alborough township council held its first meeting on Jan. 21 - 1850. At that time Alborough was part of Middlesex County, and any reference to money was in pounds shillings and pence.

There must have been a number of roads before this time as mention was made of old roads and new ones.

A resolution was passed dividing the township into 28 road divisions, with descriptions and boundaries given and an overseer appointed for each one. Then a 29th division seemed to be added as an after thought- bounded on the north east by Dunwich- north west by the Thames River, south west by the Gore and south east by the front of the 10th concession- there was no overseer listed.

At the Feb. council meeting resolutions were passed dealing with the value of land used for roads and appointed a road surveyer. In Apr., 1850 a resolution was passed to establish a road between Alborough east and Alborough west, 66 ft. wide from the River Thames to the 7th concession. It seems to be the road now known as the Division Line.

In the minutes written for Nov. 1850 there are almost four pages about roads surveyed during the year including a lengthy description of what appears to be now 76 Highway, beginning at the river and running south for more than 9 miles. We cannot determine whether this is the first survey for that road or not.

Fences

In Alborough Townships 1850 minute book there is quite a lengthy write up about fence viewers, poundkeepers and the responsibility of owners to keep animals from running at large. A by-law was passed to determine what would make a legal line fence.

The fence should be five feet six inches high. The bottom rail no more than 4 inches from the ground. The first four rails no more than four inches apart. The fifth and sixth rails should be no more than eight inches apart and the remaining rails no more than ten inches apart.

Anniversaries, Births, Deaths.

1. Mr. + Mrs. John M^cGill (50th) p. 143.
2. Mr. + Mrs. Joe Schnekenburger (50th) p. 144.
3. Mr. + Mrs. Neil M^cEachren (50th) p. 145.
4. Mr. + Mrs. A. J. M^cMurphy (50th) p. 146.
5. Mr. + Mrs. D. M. M^cCallum (50th + 60th) p. 147-148.
6. Mr. + Mrs. Jas. Dymock (50th) p. 149.
7. Mr. + Mrs. Frank M^cLarty (50th + 60th) p. 150-151.
8. Mr. + Mrs. Mac Livingstone (50th) p. 152.
9. Mr. + Mrs. Earl Dawson (50th) p. 153.
10. Mr. + Mrs. Charles Cook (50th) p. 154.
11. Mr. + Mrs. D. D. M^cCallum (50th) p. 155.
12. Mr. + Mrs. Geo. Carroll (50th) p. 156.
13. Mr. + Mrs. Duncan Stewart (50th) p. 157.
14. Mr. + Mrs. Ed Leverington (50th) p. 158.
15. Mr. + Mrs. Vero Johnston (50th) p. 158.
16. Mr. + Mrs. Wm Horner (50th) p. 159.
17. Mr. + Mrs. Duncan M^cRae (50th) p. 160.
18. Mr. + Mrs. Thomas Tait (50th) p. 161.
19. 1970 - Births, Deaths, etc. p. 162.
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