HISTORY OF EARLY DUTTON

1

The village of Dutton owes its birth to the building of the
Canada Southern Railway in 1872. But for the building of this
new railroad Dutton would never been heard of, and it was a great
blow to the neighboring village of Wallacetown when the line went
through. Its citizens christened the new place "Monkey Run"and
some gifted Wallacetownite sent Messers David McLaws and A.J.
Leitch, the chief leaders in the movement, comic sketches, rep-
resenting them staking out town lots in a swamp with numerous
monkeys jumping over and becoming entangled in the chain. How-
ever,they soon saw the new place was bound to go ahead in spite
of opposition, so many of them picked up their goods and helped
swell Dutton's population. Shortly after the road was started
A.J. Leitch and David McLaws started clearing the ground for
the new village; surveyed it into lots and built one of the
best business blocks ever put up in the place at the cost of
$22;000 .

The railway itself was called the Canada Southern and con-
sisted of a single track made of light steel anf the locomot-
ives werev all wood burners. The station was a small unpainted
frame building just east of Main St. This was decided contrast
to the later Michigan Central Railroad (M.C.R.R.) with its
heavy steel double track,block system, long fast trains and a
fine station one half-mile west of Main Street.

In the course of time this station was closed in 195 and the
building moved away. This was due to the unimportance of the
business of the village.

When the railway was started the right of way had to be chop-
ped through the wilderness. The contract for this was in the
hands of MR. DAVID McLAWS, FIRST CLERK OF COURT, St. Thomas.
Elgin County issued debentures to the amount of $2,000 to assist
in the construction of the Canada Southern Railway. However,
there was no provision for a station at Dutton principally be
cause it was not in existence at that time. When at length the
railroad was finished a small settlement had gathered at the
site. The railroad refused to recognize the little hamlet and
declined to locate a station there unless the township supp-
lement the bonus from the county.,T
he township

HISTORY OF EARLY DUTTON

The township refused. Thus for two or three years trains stopped at the crossing now known as Main Street. There was no station. Goods were taken off at the roadside and no shelter provided for either people or goods. After a time a small platform was built with a sort of shelter, a small wooden shed.

A more unfavorable site for a village could hardly have been found in the county. The spot was low and marshy and the corduroy road was kept up with difficulty, and to the west was large swamp. At the point where the railway intersected the Currie Road, named after John Currie who settled in 1819 onlot 12, in the 7th concession, a small settlement sprang into existence in 1872, The County had bonusrd the railway to the tune of $200,000.

Finally, when the village showed signs of prosperity, the corporation and the railroad officials had a meeting and the railroad agreed to build a station provided the site and cleared the land . A collection was taken up and enough subscribed to to buy the site west of Main St. which was the farm of Neil Patterson. After that the village of Dutton grew rapidly.

Naming the village was the cause of a very heated dispute. The faction west of Main Street would call the village Lisgar after the then Governor General; The other half, east of Main Street wanted it called Bennetville after George xxxxxxxxxxad Bennett who had surveyed and sub-divided the district where they lived . The feud resulted in both names being discarded and the Railroad named it Dutton after the chief engineer of the Canadian Southern Railroad. The suggestion was made by the late David McLaws. At the same time the Post Office was established and the government adopted the name of Dutton in 1874. The first postmaster was A.J. Leitch.

In the same year the first grist mill was erected xxxxxxh by A McEachern which later developed into the flour mills later owned by Wm..Hollingshead, then John E. Davies.

m   The buildings erected in 1885 were mostly frame. However, W.H. Nelson erected three brick stores on the east side of Main Street. South of the track there was one hotel a stave mill, two grain warehouses, and a blacksmith shop. On the

no

HISTORY OF EARLY DUTTON

north side were several stores, the central part of the McInt-
yre House,(additions were built later), a carriage factory,
it was moved from Wallacetown, a flour mill, a saw mill, post
office, and several other businesses. There was only one church
the present Baptist Church The Methodists built their first church
in 1878, where the Memorial Hall stands today. This was burned
down a few years later

In October of 1885 fire destroyed most of the west sided
Main Street. All the buildings were replaced with brick stomes.
Four months later a second large fire (Feb. 7th 1886) destroyed
most of the east side of the street with a loss of $10,000.
These buildings were also replaced with brick ones.

Fire was the most dreaded and most devasting factor in those
early days. There was little water and no brigade to combat it.

In 1880 Dutton made application to County Council to be In-
corporated as a village. It took the council five years, to
1885 to investigate their claims as to population etc.. Thus on
January Ist 1885 Dutton became a village. Then in January 1890
Malcolm was named to take the census of the village of Dutton
and on June 20, 1890, a by-law was passed incorporating Dutton
as a village and in 1891, Dutton was finally officially re-
cognized as a village.

Mr. A.J. Leitch was its first reeve. He was one of the first
to survey the land into lots and he built one of the best busi-
ness blocks ever put up in the place, costing $ 22,000. A short
time later this was destroyed by fire. There was no insurance
and this materially crippled the resources Mr. Leitch.

Mr. Leitch was born within 3 miles of Dutton and he sett-
led in Dutton in 1873.

The first store in Dutton was erected by Griffin and Gra-
ham, a small frame affair on the site of the Presbyterian
manse.

Then in 1896, Angus McIntyre built a frame store which was
occupied by Blue and Smith, proprietors of the village paper
the Enterprise, and Dr. Ruthven.

Peter McCallum moved an empty store from Wallacetown which

HISTORY OF EARLY DUTTON

was occupied by Angus McPherson until he built one for himself
on the east side of Main Street. Then it was occupied by Dr.
Urlin. It was destroyed by fire in 1895. It was this array of
commercial prosperity and the fact that it was central that
induced the railroad to build the depot. After this the village
grew rapidly.

The FIRST BRICK STORE was built by H. Lane of Waterford.
It was occupied by C.TURPAIN who put in general stock goods.
The store was managed by THOMAS ~~BARRETT~~ HOCKIN, who later
with MR. POOLE bought the stock. Mr. Hockin finally bought MrP
Mr. Poole's interest, This building was destroyed by fire, the
second of a series which did much to retard the growth of the
village. It was estimated that $100,000 worth of property had
gone up in smoke from the time Dutton was first settled

The first GRIST MILL was built in 1874 by A. McEachern .
Then it passed into the hands of A.J. Leitch, then to HENRY
HOLLINGSHEAD who came from Galt. He made great improvements
to it. Then it was taken over by John E. Davies and then to
his son Percy Davies. In 196⁵ it was purchased by Harold Ke🇮
Keedwell who came from Chatham. In 1963 it became a subsidiary
Milling products, ~~Cuba~~ of Chatham. In 1963, due to the in
creased labor costs, new government regulations, and the fact
that it was not located on the railroad, it was decided to
close the mills.. So in July 1967, the mills closed its doors
after a period of service of 93 years. It was noted for the
production of Swansdown Flour and was a chief source of
supply for McCormick's, London and Weston's Toronto.

On July 14th 1969, this old mill was completely destroyed
by fire of unknown origin.

The first brick store was erected by Harry Lane.

The first industry established by a joint stock company
with Jacob Morse as president.

A woollen mill operated by L.J. Wilson in 1885.

Three years after the incorporation a village municipal
hall was built for $3,000.

There were 4 hotels,two south of the track

HISTORY OF EARLY DUTTON

namely, THE LUTON ownrd by Robert Luton, from Wallacetown in 1877, and the Black Hotel, run by John Patterson.

In 1889, Dr. Reilly, a butcher, and baker had come to town.

The products of the district were grain, timber and staves. These were shipped by water from Tyrconnellwhich with Wallace-town were the chief places of business. When the railway came this was changed.

There were few sidewalks and crossings in those early days and these were of wood. Tie posts were prominent along the street with the accustomed puddle hole beside the posts scrap-ed out by the impatient horses.

Dutton at this time belonged to the town ship and was div-ided into four wards, the old Currie Road and Shackleton St. making the division.

The flour mill, built in 1872 by Archibald McEachern was bought by Henry Hollingshead who installed up-to-date machin-ery, built an elevator and office. the flour was shipped in barrel/s which were made by William Cape in a building west of the mill. In 1896 when Lord and Lady Aberdeen attended the Caledonian Games he built a beautiful arch of the barrels decorated with flags and bunting for them to pass through.

At this time there was a public hall ~~used for meetings~~ which were used for meetings

In 1889 there were 2 livery stables, 3 hotels, 3 drygoods and general stores; two groceries, one bakery, one fruit and confectionery stores, 2 jewellry stores, 2 furniture stores a hardware store, 2 drug stores, one stationery and fancy good stores, one merchant and 3 custom tailoringestablishment 2 harness shops, one house furnishings, 2 shoe-making estab-lishments ~~establishments~~, a music store, flour and feed stores butcher shop; Flour mill, woollen mills, iron and pump works stave and heading factory, planing mills, blacksmith and carriage shops, and agricultural implement dealers.

The pride which local people felt in their village in 1899 is evidenced by the following;

The situation of Dutton is excellent. East, north and south are some of the finest farms in Canada anada.

EARLY HISTORY OF DUTTON

the produce from which finds a ready market in town. The great Dunwich Marsh will soon be a thing of the past. Hundreds of acres have been reclaimed, the soil of which is the richest to be found anywhere.

The shipping facilities of Dutton are good. Its one railroad is satisfactory with its rates, the only difficulty is in getting sufficient cars to accomodate the amount of business done. The shipments are principally of flour, grain, staves, lumber , baled hay and fish. At times during the fall season an average of 60 cars a day aweek are used.

As a place to live in Dutton is ideal. We have good sociiety, excellent education priveleges, good churches and smart preachers, excellent stores, best drinking water in the world to be had for digging for it, and excellent health for the people. They do not need Dr. Sequards ax elixer of life to keep them alive. The people do not die until they get tired of living.

Further remarks in the paper were; "Dutton is the largest place between St. Thomas and Ridgetown with a population over 1,000. The travelling public has remarked that it is the liveliest and most enterprising village of its size in Western Ontario

Some of the buildings erected in 1899 were; a three story brick hotel by A.J. Leitch; building and fittings valued at $8,000; two story hotelm brick, by Wm. Eustes valued at $8,000; brick residences for Henry Hollingshead and L.J. Wilson; frame dwelling for Wm. James,$800; frame dwelling for J. Crane,$1,000; frame dwelling for L.J. Miller, frame dwelling for George Wilkie; frame house and storehouse for A.D. Urli n;frame building for Chris Davis;. dwelling for H. Somers; dwelling for James Murison; residence for Dr. Ruthven.

Total building for the year valued at $40,000.

The FIRST RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATION to establish itself was the BAPTISTS in 1877.

They built a frame church which was still in use in 1896. on the site of the present Baptist Church on west side of Main St.