

## Raids on the Talbot Settlement

Re-Enactments Saturday, May 24, and Sunday, May 25, 2003  
[Kids' Education Day](#) Friday, May 23rd



### [Backus-Page House](#), Site of the Grand Encampment

The first settlers who were granted land by Colonel Talbot established themselves along Lake View Line in Dunwich Township, where the Backus-Page House is still located. The first pioneers who came in 1809 were the Patterson, Pearce, and Story families. They were followed by Stephen Backus in 1810. Stephen's son Andrew constructed this home in 1850. It was one of the first brick dwellings in Dunwich Township. 72,000 bricks were made on the property from clay located in the ravine at the back of the house. The walls in the house are four and five bricks thick. The front door and door bell, the window panes and shutters, and the black ash, white pine, and tulip floors throughout the home are all original. The farm was called "Lakeview" when Mary-Jane and Andrew Backus lived there. All of the trees were felled in front of the house so that the family could admire the majestic waters of Lake Erie. Mary-Jane and Andrew raised a family of 12 children in their home.

Backus-Page House is located at 29424 Lake View Line, R.R. # 2,  
Wallacetown, Ontario, N0L 2M0, phone 519-762-3072.

### History

Brigadier General Duncan McArthur (great-grandfather of General Douglas McArthur) devised a proposal in August 1814 to invade the London and Western Districts (the Talbot Settlement), burning all public and private property (especially mills) and removing all available livestock and portable property. The loss of these resources would reduce the effectiveness of the British forces in operating in this area. McArthur set out from Detroit with approximately 700 mounted troops in the fall of 1814. Port Talbot was attacked and burned, as well as St. Thomas. Backus-Page House has been selected as the site for the re-enactment of the Talbot Settlement Raids in May of 2003.

## Re-Enactment Agenda



### **Saturday May 24, 2003**

- 9:00 a.m.** Roll call, flag raising
- 10:00 a.m.** Officers' Call
- 11:00 a.m.** Raid on the Talbot Settlement: American and Indian advance scouts check out Talbot's settlement. Talbot escapes and brings British reinforcements, raid moves back and forth, Americans push British back through settlement and fire the buildings.
- 2:00 p.m.** American, British, and Indian units are bused to St. Thomas for the Raids on St. Thomas.
- 3:00 p.m.** American units will be in position all along Talbot Street from Stanley to the Pioneer Museum. British and Indian units will proceed east up the hill, forcing the Americans to retreat.

### **Sunday May 25, 2003**

- 9:00 a.m.** Drumhead Service all units, memorial service for all of the fallen
- 10:00 a.m.** Officers' Call
- 11:00 a.m.** Raid on the Talbot Settlement (repeated as on Saturday's agenda)
- 2:00 p.m.** American, British, and Indian units are bused to Port Stanley for the concluding battle.
- 3:00 p.m.** A running battle through Port Stanley on both sides of Kettle Creek (canoes, etc. in creek). British cross over on the King George V Bridge and push retreating Americans onto Little Beach. The Americans will maintain their position long enough to embark as many troops as possible into waiting long boats. Americans unable to embark will be forced to surrender. Tall ship(s) will sail into harbor (end of battle).

### **Commanding Officers**

- British Commander: Peter Twist
- U.S. Commander: Tom Hurlebutt
- Militia Commander: Scott Patterson
- Naval Commander: Victor Suthren

- Long Boat Commander: Peter Rindlisbacher
  - Safety Officers: James Braund, Jason Jones
- 

### **Re-Enactor, Sutler, Blanket Trader, and Demonstrator Information**

The Raids on the Talbot Committee hopes that you will join us for what promises to be a very exciting and enjoyable event. Re-enactors will be provided with **wood, potable water, and straw** for their use in camp. In addition, we invite all registered participants to join us for **Saturday evening dinner** (roast beef or pork, potatoes, vegetables, and bread) – please bring your own plates, mugs, and cutlery, as none will be otherwise available. **Gunpowder** will also be provided for both cannons and musketry, on the strict condition that the gunpowder tins and any unused powder be returned to us before the end of the event.

The Lions Club will operate a food concession on the site, where **breakfast and lunch** will be available for purchase on Saturday and Sunday. **Ice** will be available for purchase through twice-daily ice calls.

A **pub** will be open on-site from noon to midnight (or so) on Saturday and noon to 3:00 pm on Sunday.

Those participating in **Education Day** on Friday, May 23rd, will be provided with lunch. Click [here](#) for further information on [Education Day](#), and note that you must fill out a separate [registration form for Education Day](#).

#### **Re-Enactor Move-In:**

The site will be set for re-enactor move-in by 9:00 am on Thursday, May 22nd. Please check in at the registration desk before you begin to set up – you will be directed to the appropriate area of the site.

Please note that absolutely no moving in will be allowed on Friday, May 23rd between the hours of 9:00 am and 3:30 pm, as the event is holding an Education Day and children will be on-site during those hours. No vehicles will be allowed anywhere on the site during these hours.

Please be aware that much of the site is farmer's field. While the site has been prepared for camping through growth of appropriate crops over the last several years, much of the ground is still very soft and if we have significant rainfall the roads through camp may quickly become a nightmarish quagmire. To that end, we ask, if at all possible, that you help us to limit the amount of vehicle traffic going through the camps. There will be a minimum of four Gator all terrain vehicles with trailers on the site at all times: if at all possible, we ask that you park your vehicle in the lot and allow us to help you move your camp and goods in and out in these Gators. In the event that you do take your vehicle onsite and become stuck, a tractor will be available to help you – on a first come, first served basis. All vehicles must be removed from the site and parked appropriately by 8:30 am, Saturday, May 24th, without exception.

#### **Sutler and Blanket Trader Move-In:**

The site will be open for sutler move-in at 10:00 am on Thursday, May 22nd. Please note that absolutely no moving in will be allowed on Friday, May 23rd between the hours of 9:00

am and 3:30 pm, as the event is holding an Education Day and children will be on-site during those hours. No vehicles will be allowed anywhere on the site during these hours. All vehicles must be removed from the site and parked appropriately by 8:30 am, Saturday, May 24th, without exception.

**All selling spaces, whether on Sutlers' Row or in the camps, will be assigned**, so anyone planning to sell any items in any way, shape, or form must check in with the Sutler Co-Ordinator before beginning to set up your camp. If you set up before checking in or in a space that has not been assigned to you, you will be asked to move, no matter how far along you are in your setup procedure. The Committee reserves the right to ask anyone setting up shop early or in a space not assigned to them to move their shop to their assigned space. Should the directions of the Committee in this matter not be followed within a reasonable time frame, the Committee will gladly return the trader's entry donation and remove the trader, their tentage, goods, vehicle, and any other chattels from the site.

The Sutlers' Row area is easily accessible by vehicles and is on stable ground; traders wishing to set up in the camps please refer to the information above under "Re-enactor Move-In" with regard to site access and vehicle limitations.

**All sutlers, blanket traders, merchants, and anyone planning to sell any items** will be asked to provide a donation to the event's auction or door prizes. The Committee reserves the right to ask anyone not willing to make such a donation to cease and desist from selling on the site. Should these directions of the Committee not be respected, the Committee will remove the trader, their tentage, goods, vehicle, and any other chattels from the site.

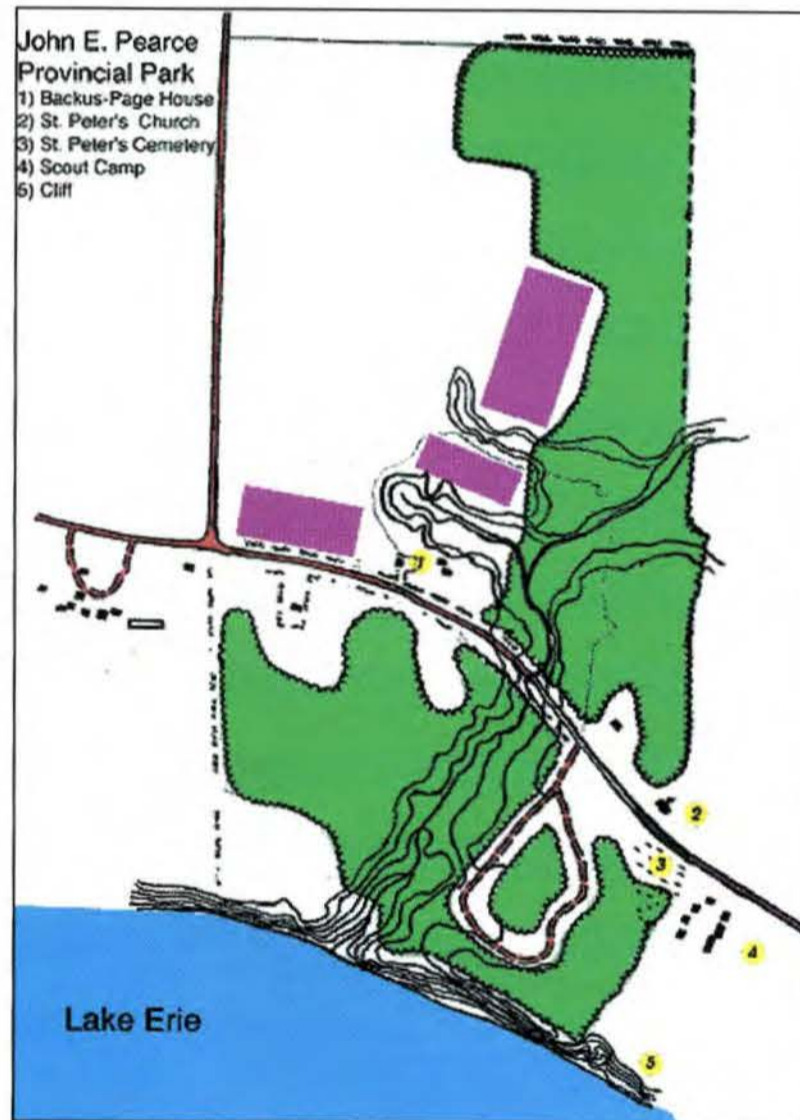
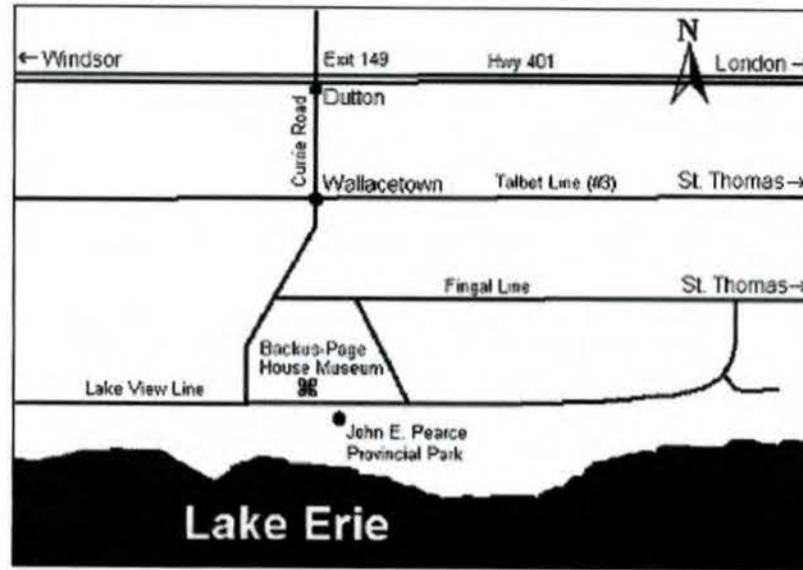
**Early Arrivals:**

The site will open for early arrivals as early as Monday, May 19th at noon. However, the camp will not be completely laid out and some of the facilities (porta-johns, firewood, etc.) may not be available until later in the week, so early arrivals must be prepared to camp in the most primitive of conditions. Sutlers, blanket traders, and anyone else planning to sell any items during the event are welcome to arrive early, but will not be allowed to set up their shops until 10:00 am, Thursday, May 22nd as all selling spaces will be assigned and the Sutler Co-Ordinator will not be on the site until that time. The Committee reserves the right to ask anyone setting up shop early or in a space not assigned to them to move their shop to their assigned space. Should the directions of the Committee in this matter not be followed within a reasonable time frame, the Committee will gladly return the trader's entry donation and remove the trader, their tentage, goods, vehicle, and any other chattels from the site.

**Move-Out:**

Move-out begins at 3:30 pm on Sunday, May 25th. No vehicles will be allowed on the site before 3:30 pm for any reason. As with the move-in, please allow us to help you move out with the Gator ATVs instead of bringing your vehicle onto the site, if at all possible. We truly appreciate your consideration and patience in this matter.

### **Raids on the Talbot Registration Form**

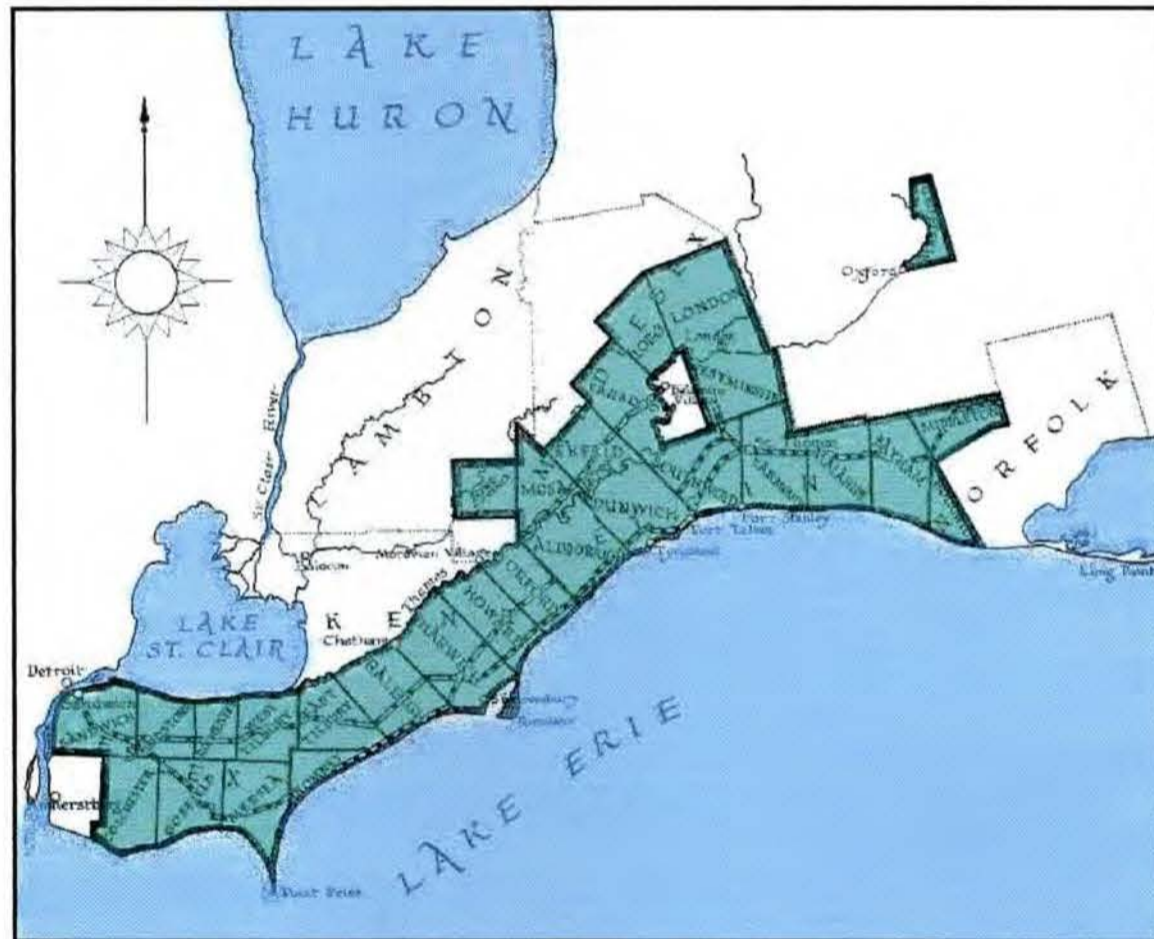




## Talbot Settlement History

Site Navigator

A centuries-old story of Colonialism, Conflict, and Creativity. With the advent of the 200th anniversary of the Settlement's founding in the year 2003 we have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to rediscover the dramatic impact this settlement had on our Province's rich cultural heritage, past, present and future.



On May 21, 1803, an ambitious 32 year old Irishman by the name of Col. Thomas Talbot ceremoniously cut down the first tree in a settlement stretching 260 kilometers along the North shore of Lake Erie from Long Point to the Detroit River. Talbot occupied a unique place among the movers and shakers of the Province of Ontario in Canada. An agent of the government, entrusted with the duty of locating settlers on Crown Lands, and of superintending the performance of the settlement duties, he granted land to applicants who met with his approval and withheld it from those who did not. When his settlers failed to comply with his regulations as to residence and labour, he took away their land and gave it to others. By these autocratic methods, almost exempt from control by the Provincial Government, he was instrumental in colonizing twenty-nine townships in Southwestern Ontario.

A younger son in a family of twelve children, Thomas was born in 1771 into one of the most ancient Anglo-Irish families -- dating back to the twelfth century. Fresh from the Viceroy's court in Dublin, Talbot first came to Canada in the summer of 1790 to join his regiment at Quebec. From 1791 to 1794 he served as aide to Lieutenant-Governor John Graves Simcoe, playing a minor part in the organization of the newly formed Province of Upper Canada. In 1801, after an absence of nearly seven years, he returned as a private citizen, having abandoned a promising military career and the society of the Old World for the dubious life of a pioneer and backwoodsman in Southwestern Ontario.

At the epicenter of the struggle for control of Southwestern Ontario during the War of 1812, the Talbot Settlement experienced bitter and often brutal conflicts, which involved a number of legendary historic characters, including Isaac Brock, Henry Proctor, William Henry Harrison, Oliver Hazard Perry, and Tecumseh. Colonel of the Middlesex Militia during the war, Talbot narrowly missed being captured during several raids on his household, which was plundered and burned along with his mill and outbuildings in 1814.

Staunchly anti-reform during the Rebellion of 1837, Talbot retained many political ideas from a passing age. He fought fiercely any idea or element that hinted at change, and he regarded democratic ideas as insidious enemies of the proper and orderly way of life. He wished to be regarded as a patriarch, the "Father" of his settlement, surrounded by a grateful, respectful, and submissive populace. The tragedy of his life was that his "children" grew up and rebelled against this parental discipline and his unsuccessful efforts to force them into obedience.

When he died in 1853, the wilderness to which he had come a half century before had been converted into a county of cultivated fields and comfortable homes, with numerous villages and towns along with the best roads in Canada. Much of the credit for this development must go to him. Settlers either loved or hated him -- there was no middle ground. Talbot was, and is, an enigmatic character whose deeds are far better known than his personality. The Talbot Settlement was home not only to English, Irish, Scottish, and American settlers but also the First Nations of the Delaware, Munse Oneida, Moraviantown, and the Caldwell. Prior to the American Civil War, the Talbot Settlement was the terminus of the Underground Railway for thousands of Afro-Canadians who settled in Buxton, Chatham, London, and St. Thomas.

Representatives from the First Nations, Museum London, Buxton Historic Site and Museum, Lambton, Elgin and Tyrconnell Historical Societies, the Kent Military Re-Enactment Society, Tenth Royal Veterans Regiment, and Butler's Rangers have come together as the Talbot Settlement Bi-Centennial Committee. Recognizing the opportunity for increased visibility that promoting our history can generate in Southwestern Ontario with the upcoming 200th Anniversary in 2003, the committee is planning creative and lasting ways to reveal our story of Colonialism, Conflict and Creativity from one end of the settlement to the other focusing on the theme: "Loyal We Remain."

Selected events and themes from the Talbot regime will be written about, re-enacted, discussed and exhibited over the course of the bi-centennial year. The events and activities will take place at a number of historic sites whose origins date from this period, including the Baby House in Windsor, Fairfield Museum in Moraviantown, Buxton National Historic Site and Museum in North Buxton, Bacus-Page House in Tyrconnell, John R. Park Homestead in Essex, Eldon House in London and the Middlesex County Building in London.

The centerpieces of all of the planned activities will be the re-enactment of Talbot's 1803 arrival, which will take place at Port Stanley on May 21st, and a Grand Encampment at Backus-Page House in Tyrconnell on May 23 through 25th, with a re-enactment of the raid made on Talbot's home in 1814 as well as the destruction of St. Thomas during the same year. The concluding battle of the Raids on the Talbot Settlement will occur in Port Stanley on May 25th as British Troops and Allies push the retreating Americans off the beach and onto their ships.

Commemorative plans also include a commemorative postage stamp, a Living History Conference entitled "Rants, Rails and Rogues" at Fanshawe College on March 29, 2003 with keynote speaker John Kenneth Galbraith, and an exhibition running the full year of the Bi-Centennial mounted in the Interpretive Center at Eldon House in London. This exhibition will be based on original papers, maps and works of art and will focus on Talbot's life, his career, and his close relationship with the Harris Family.

Another key part of the Bi-Centennial will be the restoration of "Here Will I Nest" a full-colour feature film shot by London film maker Mel Turner in 1941. Filmmaker Chris Doty will reconstruct the film's sound track and provide background on the making of the film as part of a complete video package.

In an era when history is considered irrelevant, the Bi-Centennial Committee is making a commitment to harnessing our region's extant authenticity as a distinct competitive advantage. The story of the Talbot Settlement is uniquely ours. Kingston, Toronto, and Niagara-On-The-Lake have long celebrated their history as cornerstones of their identities, but our region has never before fully, or collectively, tapped into the power of its own remarkable story. We can bring the history that has always surrounded us alive at last, and create a new legacy, rooted in our story of "Loyal We Remain" to our past, our present and our future. Plan on attending one or all of the Bi-Centennial events!

For a full listing of all of the exciting events planned for this year, [click here](#).

---

© 2003 Raids on Talbot Settlement. All rights reserved.

### **BLACKSMITH (from page 1)**

blacksmith where they watched him form a metal poker with a dragon head on it.

At one point a piece of metal shot toward his eye and when it was time for questions, one of the Grade Fives asked him if he had any goggles. The man laughed and told him he was on his way to get them from his car. Progress is a good thing sometimes.

The children also made candles, played the fife, marched in the band, saw a cannon shot off periodically throughout the day, learned to dance with an English fiddler playing for them, saw native dancers perform their dances of the time learned the process

of spinning wool, participated in military drills, surveyed the land, went to Colonel Talbot's grave site, and helped to set up and print newspaper in the manner it was done at that time. There were so many stations, and only so many hours in the day, so every group did not get to experience every station present, which is too bad except that by attending Education Day they were permitted to attend the festivities free for the rest of the weekend with their parents.

The Tryconnell Heritage Society did an amazing job with this venture. Eva Dryfout would like to thank all of the volunteers who helped with this event, without whom none of this would have been possible. There were over 60 volunteers to help to make this a success. The planning and organization was expertly

applied, with every tiny detail thought of and incorporated into the event.

One hundred years ago at the Centennial Anniversary there were parades and parties to celebrate the event, something you read about in the history books. This Bicentennial Celebration has definitely earned its place in the history books and given our great-great grandchildren something to be proud of and something to aspire to when planning their own celebrations to honour this event in history.



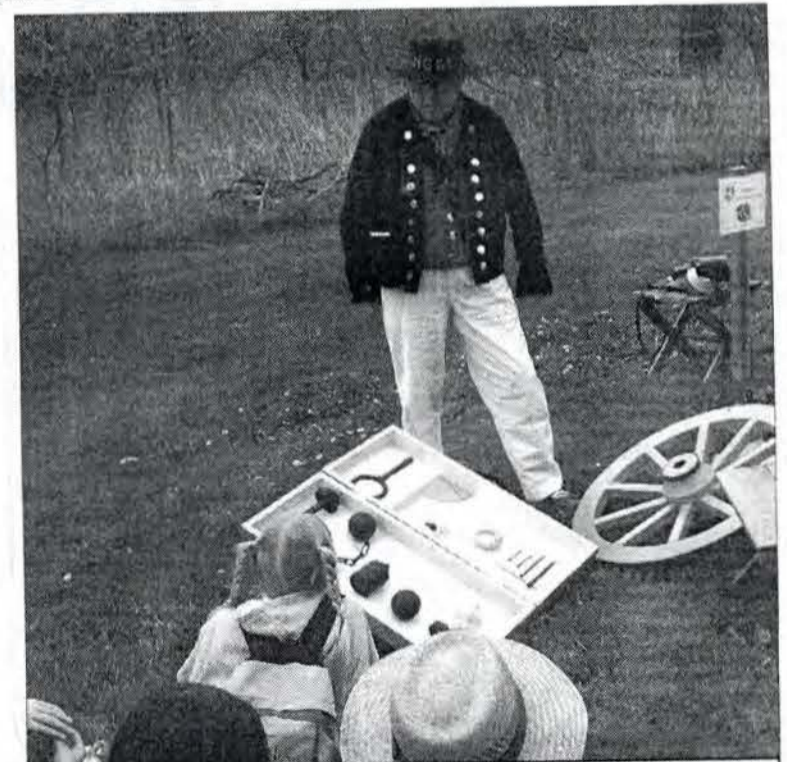


Colonel Talbot and one of his soldiers stand at the front door of Backus Page House greeting the children on Education Day.  
**The SunMercury/Tami Sabo**



On site at the Backus Page House one of the stations present for the children to watch play out was the Blacksmith at work. While the children watched he created different pieces of artwork.  
**The SunMercury/Tami Sabo**

*Friday May 23<sup>rd</sup> 2003, 1,200 children came out for Education day at the Backus-Page House for Colonel Talbot 200 yrs Anniversary.*



One of the stations set up for the children to enjoy at Education Day was the Cannon. The volunteer explained the parts of the cannon to the children, and eventually fired the cannon numerous times throughout the day. Of course, the children enjoyed this station immensely.  
**The SunMercury/Tami Sabo**

## 200th edition of Talbot dinner held, harks back to 1803 inaugural event

by Terry Heffernan

WALLACETOWN - The annual Talbot dinner was held on Wednesday May 21 at the St. Peters Anglican Church near Wallacetown. The event is put on by the Talbot Settlement Society to celebrate Colonel Thomas Talbot's establishing a colony in 1803 that stretched along the North Shore of Lake Erie from Long Point to the Detroit River.

As well as it being the bicentennial celebration of this historic event, this year there was a special unveiling of a painting depicting new settlers arriving to build their homes in the settlement. Peter Rinlisbacher, a well-known marine painter from Amherstburg, Ontario, was commissioned to paint the "Pearce Family Arrival, 1809". This

painting depicted Colonel Thomas Talbot greeting the Pearce family as they arrived at Tyrconnell to become the first settlers in the Talbot Settlement. Descendants of the Pearce family were in attendance as were descendants of some of the original settlers like the Story, Backus, Page and Littlejohn families. The painting was unveiled at the dinner and not long after the unveiling, it was announced that the County of Elgin had made an offer to purchase the historic depiction of the one of the County's first settlers. The sale will not be final until County Council approves the offer to purchase the painting. The Talbot Settlement Society made 1,000 prints of this painting and they are on sale now.

## Works staff happy to have truck

by Rick Sinclair

DUTTON-DUNWICH - Dutton-Dunwich township staff is happy to have their new works truck in their possession.

Operations Manager Bob Leitch said that the new F350 1 ton truck, which they received at the beginning of May, is much more user friendly than the old 1994 Econoline Van that they had been using. He said that the former ½ ton van, which the township had bought used in 1996, was "plain worn out" from carrying around lots of heavy equipment and excessive mileage. Leitch said the new vehicle's biggest feature is that most of the storage areas are around the outside of the truck, making it much easier for access to tools than constantly climbing into the van. The cab and chassis for the truck were purchased from Co-Trac Ford, and then the utility body was installed on the chassis at Willsie Bros. Truck Body in Aylmer. This new, stronger truck joins the bucket truck township staff uses for hydro work in the township.

## Talbot re-enactment included naval displays

by Terry Heffernan

TYRCONNELL - During the War of 1812, Brigadier General Duncan MacArthur, Great Grandfather of Major General Douglas MacArthur, invaded Southwestern Ontario from Detroit in 1814 with 700 mounted troops. He planned to disrupt the area and weaken the British presence in London, St Thomas, Port Stanley and Port Talbot. After the American forces burned the settlements of St. Thomas and Port Talbot and laid waste to the surrounding farmlands, the British forces rallied and forced the American invaders to the shores of Lake Erie where they were evacuated by ship and returned to Detroit. This series of skirmishes would come to be called the Raids on the Talbot Settlements.

Part of the festivities celebrating the Talbot Settlement Bi-Centennial (1803-2003) is a re-enactment of the raids. In Port Stanley on Sunday May 25, there was a re-enactment of the final skirmish

where the American soldiers retreated along Kettle Creek to the shores of Lake Erie and were evacuated in Long Boats to awaiting U.S. warships. The Red Witch, a 77-foot schooner from Sandusky Ohio, was there to take part in this re-enactment. The Red Witch was built in 1986 and is co-owned by Bud Kurtzinger and Karl Busam. It is their first visit to Port Stanley and they were glad to be taking part in the Talbot Raids re-enactment. They were in port on Saturday waiting for their part to be played out on Sunday. While they were there, they invited visitors on board to learn a little about the schooner and to get a close look at the ship and hear a tall tale that explained the silver dollar covering a hole in an authentic 18th century wheel. It is said, with tongue firmly planted in cheek that a seaman standing watch in front of the wheel was shot

SEE BULLET / 14

## WI meet and talk about 50th anniversary of D-Day, which is coming up next week

WALLACETOWN - On Thursday 9 May the Wallacetown W.I. met at 3pm at the South Dunwich Community Hall, nine members were present. Pres. Helen Van Brenk opened the meeting with the Institute Ode, Mary Stewart Collect and the Lord's Prayer, then read an article titled "Out of the Mouths of Babes". The secretary and treasurer's reports were given, and correspondence read.

The Annual Meeting was held on 14 May. Wallacetown and River Road W.I.'s were in charge of registration and lunch. Helen Van Brenk, Kay Waite, Kay Lilley and Louie Lackey went on the 13th to help set up at the Fingal United Church. On 14 May, Helen, Louie, Kay Lilley, Darlene Ford, Dorothea Monteith and Sally McIntyre attended the meeting.

on his trip in 2000 for the 50th reunion of D-Day. Don was one of 600 Canadians of which 320 were Veterans to make this trip to Europe to celebrate the anniversary of the end of World War II on 5 May. From his regiment of 1,200, they have had 46 reunions, although this may be their last due to the age factor.

They toured down the Rhine River by ship, treated with the highest respect from Hollanders were they stayed with a host family which was an honour for both parties. Everyone takes part in the celebrations a national holiday with parades, presentations and laying of wreaths and flowers. Don had the honour of laying flowers on behalf of the

Vets. An appointment had been previously made to meet with Prince Bernard of Holland. In 1945 Don had met the Prince in Utrecht, and the Prince had remembered their meeting in 45. The Vets all took part in the parade on D-Day, some were able to walk while others rode through the two-hour journey. Kay Waite thanked Don for his presentation.

Next meeting will be held on Thursday, 5 June, at 1:30pm. We meet at the South Dunwich Community Hall, to tour Mac Lilley Horse farm. Convenor Kay Lilley. Roll Call - Name a chore which you did as a young person growing up at home. Lunch at Sons of Scotland Park, Dutton.

May 29<sup>th</sup> 2003

# Tyrconnell education day event gives classes living history lesson

By Scott Hilgendorff  
*The Chronicle*

History came to life last Friday as 1,214 students from across the school district took part in the Tyrconnell Heritage Society's Education Days.

"We felt it was a great opportunity for the students to see the life of the settlers that came here," said Eve Dryfout, society member and organizer for the education day.

Every school from the Thames Valley District School Board, the London Catholic School Board and any private schools that could be found were contacted by the society to take part in the day.

Taking place at the Backus-Page House and surrounding park areas, students had a chance to rotate through several different stations featuring a range of interactive opportunities relating to life in the early 1800s.

"This allowed the students to rediscover their cultural heritage and their region's history," Dryfout said.

The event was held in conjunction with bicentennial celebrations being held across the area celebrating the 200th anniversary of the formation of the Talbot Settlement.

Students could visit several of 30 different stations that taught them how settlers made the items they used from candles to barrels.

There was an old printing press where students could learn how newspapers were first made, weaving demonstrations and a chance to see how native residents lived their lives.

More than 60 volunteers in period costumes helped put the event together which Dryfout said fit into school curriculums of many of the students.

"It brings the learning to life," said Dean McLenaghan, who teaches Grade 8 history at West Elgin Senior Elementary School (WESES).

"To see the blacksmith [working], their intrigued by the way it was. There's so many things they'd never normally get to experience," he said, adding the day gave students a chance to literally see what life was like



Jane Morphew of Museum London demonstrates an old printing press in which lead or wooden letters are placed on the press individually to spell out each word on a newspaper page.

during that time period, rather than just reading about it."

"It was a tough life. They didn't have the technology we have today. It was pretty hard," said William Drummelsmith, a Grade 8 student from WESES.

"It makes me realize how much we have today. This is what it all started with," said Liona van der Zon, also from WESES.

Both said the experience was interesting and a great opportunity for them to learn from the hands-on experience.

The education day led into continued events at the Backus-Page House side which featured a re-enacted raid on the grounds both last Saturday and Sunday.

Events spilled into Port Stanley and St. Thomas where other raids were re-enacted on the weekend.

Saturday May 24<sup>th</sup> 2003 - Raid on the ST THOMAS Settlement.



A running battle will occur along Old Talbot Street moving east toward the Old ST. THOMAS Church and prepared to be in the midst of the Battle.

# Gunshots, smoke thrill crowd

By TIMES-JOURNAL STAFF *May 26 2003*



Even the heartiest of soldiers needs a nap every now and again. War of 1812 re-enactor Ed Bolla manages to catch a few moments of shut-eye before Saturday's street battle erupted in St. Thomas. (T-J photo)



In the midst of Saturday's battle, an American gunner turns away as a cannon blasts advancing British troops in St. Thomas. (T-J photo)



U.S. infantrymen leave clouds of pungent smoke as they take aim at advancing British Red Coats in St. Thomas during Saturday's re-enactment. (T-J photo)

"I liked the gun shots, they were smoky and really cool." There are more eloquent ways to describe Saturday's street battle in St. Thomas, but nine-year-old Benjamin Schuit has a point.

For the crowd of 600 lining Talbot Street near the Jumbo monument, watching a group of British Red Coats or Yankees in grey disappear in a blaze of musket fire and pungent smoke was indeed "really cool."

Saturday's raid on St. Thomas was part of the Talbot Settlement bicentennial celebration, but it had a modern twist, too, as Mayor Peter Ostojic fell captive to the U.S. forces.

"We really don't have the forces to hold them back, so we're retreating in good order," said Thomas Hurlbut, an Orillia, Ont., native commanding the U.S. forces Saturday as Brig. Gen. Duncan MacArthur.

He described the American unit as "a proud one, a good one and an honourable one."

Actually, several of the U.S. ranks were made up by Canadians.

"We try to carry the Stars and Stripes as well as we would carry the Union Jack if we were on the other side," he said.

Hurlbut has been taking part in re-enactments for 11 years and stressed the battles are only half the fun, with the encampment experience being equally enjoyable.

"We've recreated the village life of a bygone era and we just move the village around from historic site to historic site," he said.

Wendy Pepper has watched several re-enacted battles and brought her husband and three young children from Belmont to see the action.

"It was nice to see it in St. Thomas. I like it all, I just like getting out and watching it and seeing the muskets and the old uniforms," she said.

Lugging a cannon back as the crowd applauded their efforts, re-enactor Russ Guatrex of Delhi, Ont., said it was a thrill to take part in the street battle — especially with the crowd so close.

"You're always on the move so you get to be a little bit creative," he said. "We had a wonderful response, which is always nice. It helps us put on a better show."

*A running battle on Talbot St, St Thomas  
Saturday May 24 2003*



LOCAL

# Colonel 'delighted with everyone'

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1  
 which were clearly a highlight of the year-long 200th anniversary celebration.

An estimated 2,700 were drawn to Backus-Page over three days (including 1,200 school children Friday). St. Thomas drew more than 500 on Saturday and 5,000 to 6,000 descended on Port Stanley for Sunday's finale.

There was an evident sense of satisfied relief among organizers Sunday.

"The public is impressed and they want us to do it again — so they better start volunteering," said Player.

What would the colonel have thought?

"He'd be proud that we're focussing on everything in the settlement, not just him. He'd be very proud of what his settlement has turned out to be," Player observed.

"Exactly. To see this many people out and

what (the settlement) has become," agreed Brian Masschaele, Elgin county liaison on the committee.

Col. Talbot (Rev. Nick Wells when he's not on duty) was, as a matter of fact, duly impressed.

"The colonel was just delighted with everyone. It was just spectacular, better than expectations," Wells said, with Talbot's characteristic lilt in his voice.

Despite forecasted rain, the weather co-operated, causing Wells to remark the real Col. Talbot must have been involved.

"We had somebody upstairs pulling the strings for us."

More than 200 re-enactors took part and they drew hearty applause from appreciative audiences at every stop.

"I've had a ball. I'm from western Michigan and I drove a long way to come to this," said re-enactor Brian Holmblade of Whitehall, Mich. "The way the crowd has been

reacting to us, it's been great."

Thomas Hurlbut of Orillia, Ont., commanded the American forces in St. Thomas and Port Stanley and, as a history lover, he was thrilled to have a big audience, filled with so many young people.

"All too often you go to a historical society meeting and it's very much a white-haired group of people there. We're trying to incorporate the family into what's going on," he said.

A retired history teacher, Albert Pordiff of

London, Ont., said he hoped the battles would show children that Canadian history isn't boring.

"This is living history where you attempt to move people from book learning to as close to reality as you are going to get," he said.

And while it took a team to make the weekend such a hit, Masschaele stressed, "The credit for the success of this weekend really goes to Nick Wells and Diana Player. They have devoted thousands of hours to pulling this off."



A grandmother's hands provide the perfect cover for a youngster's ears as the battle between U.S. and British forces rages all around them in St. Thomas on Saturday afternoon. A crowd of 600 took in the fight, part of the War of 1812 re-enactments during the Talbot Settlement bicentennial. (T-J photo)



Saturday May 24<sup>th</sup> and May 25<sup>th</sup> Raids on the Settlement  
Backus - Page House - Tyrconnell - John E. Pearce Provincial Park.



Tyrconnell, Backus - Page House.



Visit historic shops and  
merchants along sutlers  
row.



Colonel Thomas Talbot (portrayed  
here by Nick Wells).