

Businesses

Wallacetown in the 1860s consisted of the following business establishments:

Blackwood, John A. General merchant

John A. Blackwood was the son of Robert Blackwood. His father had stores in St. Thomas, Iona, Wallacetown and West Lorne. John Blackwood later pulled up stakes and settled down in Saskatchewan. Robert had seven sons, who were James, Donald, John, William, Robert, Thomas and Alexander Duff. Robert Blackwood took up residence in Vancouver, British Columbia, after leaving West Lorne.

Bradt, Robert Wagonmaker

Cameron, David Shoemaker

Campbell and McLean Saw and grist mill

In 1857 A. and J. McPherson operated a shingle mill. Angus McPherson had a large wooded lot on Lot 3 north and west of Wallacetown. In 1866 Samuel Stidwell and John McFarlane purchased Duncan McLean's planing mill.

Clay, David Elgin Hotel, southeast corner

Clay later changed the name to the Ontario House. The first concession north of the corners was named Clay Street because of the settlement of the Clay family. Dr. George W. Clay, son of John and Martha Clay, was raised in the district.

Forbes, Duncan Cooper

In 1854 Duncan Forbes came to Upper Canada with his wife, Janet Campbell, and two sons, Peter and Robert, and settled in Wallacetown. They worked as carpenters. Peter Forbes married Margaret Graham and had two sons, Archibald and John. Robert Forbes married Eva Gosnell and had five children: Kate, Margaret, Duncan, John and Mary. The last two died early in life.

Gunn, Robert Shoemaker, later the postmaster

Henry, Colin G. Anglo-American Hotel

This frame building was located on the northwest corner. It was later destroyed by fire.

Keillor, Thomas C. Butcher

Lindsay, James Grocer

Luton, Thomas Britannia Hotel

Located on the southwest corner of Gordon and Talbot Streets.

McBrayne, A. & D. Machinists

This foundry burned down in 1885.

McFarlane and McKellor Builders

Archibald McFarlane erected the first hotel in Wallacetown on the northwest corner. He operated it for a time and then went back to carpentry and erected many of the houses after the log cabins surpassed their usefulness. He died at seventy years of age.

McGill, David Tinsmith

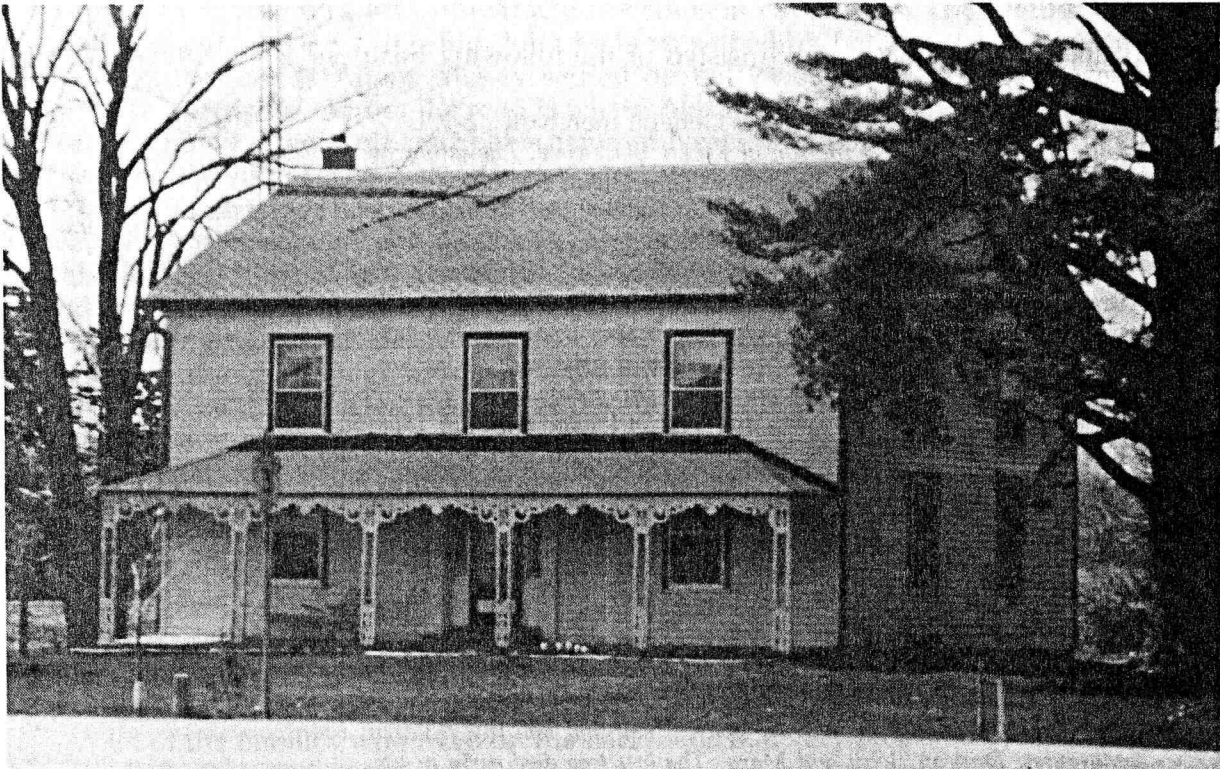
McIntyre, L.W. Grocer and auctioneer

McKillop, John General merchant and postmaster

The assistant postmaster was A.S. Barclay, who settled in the village in 1860 or 1868. Barclay, later the postmaster, was succeeded by Robert Gunn, who was a shoemaker. Barclay was postmaster for fifteen years. He died in 1893.

McLaws, David Blacksmith

He and his brother Archibald also built carriages. The shop was first located in Wallacetown and in 1877 it was moved to Dutton. It was used by T.E. Lilley for fifty-four years. The main part of the carriage works was converted into the Commercial Hotel. A portion of the building was moved to the corner of Mary and Currie streets. The Commercial Hotel was built on the site that was later occupied by the Queen's Hotel.



The McGugan home, once a hotel.

McPhail and Burwell
 McIntosh, Angus
 Rapelje, John
 Ruthven, D.G.
 Stinson and Hearne
 Thompson, Dugald
 Urghart, A.C.

Harness shop
 Shoemaker
 Harness shop
 Medical doctor
 Cabinetmakers
 Blacksmith
 Tailor

The first stage service between the villages of Wallacetown and Ridgetown was started in 1872. It was founded by Jacob Beedle and Paul Saunders, who came from Iona and Wallacetown. They also established a livery stable in Wallacetown. The first stage was built at Wallacetown and was driven by Ephriam Lumley. It was an open stage painted yellow with red painted seats covered with tapestry. It was a gala affair and first appeared with honoured guests as passengers. The reins were held by Paul Saunders, later of Detroit.

Wallacetown was at its peak just before the railroads came through. The main artery of travel and commercial traffic was the Talbot Road. The coming of the railroads presented an opportunity for ambitious and energetic businessmen to relocate their business outlets, and the people, seeing this happen, moved away. Slowly the hamlets and villages died. In some cases the buildings were moved while others were abandoned and fell into decay. Wallacetown was just one example of this.

In 1877 the village had the following business establishments:

Cameron, Daniel
 Clark, Joseph
 Clay, David
 Crews, Oliver

Boot and shoemaker
 General merchant
 Ontario House
 Carpenter

Cusick, Robert	Sawyer
Cusick, Richard	Butcher
Cusick, Samuel	Drover
Forbes, Duncan	Cooper
Graham, A.	Cabinet and coffinmaker
Gunn, Donald A.	Contractor
Hearnes, George	Livery stable
Henry, Colin G.	Anglo-American Hotel
Hind, James	Merchant
James, Richard	Cooper
Ling, Dr. George W.	

He came to Wallacetown in 1866 and opened his practice in 1867. He later opened an office in Dutton. I understand that he practiced there until 1900, when he moved to Melbourne and served the needs of the sick for two years. His son George went to St. Thomas Collegiate and from there became an honors student in mathematics at the University of Toronto. He earned his Ph.D. at Columbia University. He was a professor of mathematics at the University of Saskatchewan, and later Dean of Arts. When he retired he moved to Toronto. He also taught mathematics at the University of Western Ontario during the summer months. When Dr. Ling died he left no family.

Little, W.A.	Tailor
Luton, Thomas	Britannia House
McBeth, Alexander	

In the *Historical Atlas of Elgin County* he is listed as the captain of the militia. He was born in Selkirk, Manitoba, the son of George McBeth, native of Kildonan, Sutherlandshire, Scotland, and was a prominent official in the Hudson's Bay Company. George McBeth and his wife Catherine brought with them from the Red River settlement to the township of Dunwich a family of five children, the eldest being George, who was twelve years of age. The other children were Donald, who died on July 20, 1851, at twenty-four, Alexander, John and Christina or Christianna, who became the first wife of Hector McPherson. George McBeth, Sr., died on August 20, 1852. He was fifty-three years of age. Catherine McBeth died on the 29th of December, 1876, at seventy-six. Three other children were born in Upper Canada, Robert, Isobella and Catherine. Isobella married Neil Whyte. She died on February 17, 1909. Catherine remained single and died three days after her sister. Old George McBeth subsequently moved to Euphemia Township, but young George took up residence with Colonel Talbot in 1839, and his brother Donald did the same in 1840. Alexander McBeth became interested in the mercantile business in Wallacetown. It is said that he settled in Wallacetown in 1857. He was very military minded and soon became part of the local militia. He served during the Fenian Raids and rose to the rank of major. In his last years he retired to the McBeth estate at Port Talbot where he died on December 31, 1897, at sixty-seven. At the time of his death he left behind two brothers, John of London, Ontario, and Robert of Southwold Station. He also left behind two sisters, Mrs. Whyte and Catherine.

McColl, Dr. Daniel S.	Physician
Melvin, John	Cabinetmaker
Miller, J.K.	Miller
Miller, Albert	General merchant; partner of McKellor
McBrayne, Mr.	Machinist
McCay, Mrs.	Milliner
McLaws, Duncan	Wagonmaker
McLaws, William	Livery stable
McCracken, Miss	Milliner
McDiarmid, Reverend Neil	Presbyterian Church minister
McDiarmid, Donald	Boots and shoes
McFarlane, Archibald	Machinist

McGill, David	Dealer
McGregor, Colin	Teamster
<i>Colin McGregor died in 1920 in his seventy-ninth year. He settled in Wallacetown in 1869 and had a livery for sixteen years. In 1891 he moved to Dutton.</i>	
McIntyre, Hugh	Carpenter
McIntyre, John	Steam sawmill
McIntyre, James	Fruit tree agent
McIntyre, Mrs.	Dressmaker
McIntyre, L.W.	Issuer of marriage licenses, conveyancer and insurance agent
McKellor, Daniel	Cooper
McKillop, J.P.	General merchant; partner of Mr. Miller
McKillop, John	Justice of the peace, postmaster and general store

His business was located west of the corner next to the Anglo-American Hotel.

McKillop and McIntyre	Flour and sawmill
McLean, Duncan and brother	Planing mill
McPhail, Daniel	Harness shop
McTavish, Duncan	Shoemaker
Newcombe, Mr.	Photographer
Parish, Thomas A.	Druggist
Pearce, John L.	Cheese factory

It was located on Lot 10 of the tenth concession south of Wallacetown. In later years the factory was moved to Wallacetown. Alvro Keillor purchased it and had it rebuilt with his living quarters on the second floor. He also took up butter making. The factory was operated by every member of his family until he sold out to R.E. Fraser. Three sons of Alvro and Ada (Green) Keillor, Benjamin, Frederick A. and Clifford M., became doctors. Sidney, another son who was born on December 31st, 1896, was fatally wounded during the First World War in France. He died on April 17, 1918. Ada died in 1936 and Alvro died the following year.

Rapelje, John	Harness shop
Risdon, W. & J.	Hardware

On the 12th of February, 1913, William Risdon breathed his last at his residence at 48 Centre Street in St. Thomas, a house he had erected in 1875. It was a large rambling frame house that had the reputation of being haunted. As a little boy, I spent much time in the old house dressed up as a ghost and enjoyed scaring my friends. The closets upstairs were full of old Victorian dresses. When Risdon passed away, he left his wife Mary, three daughters, two brothers and one sister. The Risdons came from Devonshire, England, and landed at Quebec in 1852. Mr. Risdon, the father of William Risdon, was a skilled craftsman in metal and his sons picked up the trade. The Risdons really got their start when they and Mr. Morrison purchased the tinsmith shop and hardware in Shedden when Mr. Spikeman decided to sell and move to Dakota. The next step the Risdons took was to open a hardware business in Fingal. It was while they were in Fingal that William Risdon married Mary Brotherhood, daughter of Horace Brotherhood. John, his brother, married Jennie Fulton. The brothers expanded their business and had stores in Wallacetown and St. Thomas. In 1875 William Risdon moved to St. Thomas and established the Erie Iron Works on St. Catharine Street, where he remained a few years and then located his foundry and business on Talbot Street in the old Ermatinger Block east of Church Street. He was in operation until his health failed and the business was taken over by his son-in-law. John Risdon moved to Charlottetown while Joseph Risdon left the country and located at Detroit. His only sister became Mrs. White of Brantford. The daughters of William Risdon were Ethel, who died as a child; Gertrude, who later became Mrs. Hugh McLean and died at thirty in 1898; Blanche M., who died at twenty-nine in 1904; and Ann, who became Mrs. J.B. Davidson of St. Thomas. One of the daughters

became Mrs. E.T. Kellam of Niagara Falls. Another remained single. Mary Risdon died in 1918. She was seventy-two years of age. They had one son by the name of Horace William who died as an infant. A number of years ago Mr. and Mrs. J.B. Davidson donated a silver tea set to the local museum. It was at one time the property of Mr. and Mrs. William Risdon. William Risdon was very active in local affairs and took part in township council. John Risdon was interested in banking. He was born in 1848 and died in 1930.

Ruthven, Dr. D.G. Physician

He started practicing in Wallacetown at the age of twenty-four in 1864 following his graduation from Ann Arbor, Michigan. In 1867 he took his degree at Victoria University and returned to Wallacetown, practicing there until 1889, when he moved to Dutton. Dr. George Ruthven was associated with his father following his graduation from Trinity University in 1895. Dr. George Ruthven, Sr., was a vigorous Reformer in politics, chairman of the board of management of Knox Presbyterian Church, Dutton, and represented Dunwich Township for a number of years on Elgin County Council as reeve and deputy reeve.

Thompson, Dugald Blacksmith

Urquhart, A.C. Merchant

He was the son of the mayor of Toronto and the grandson of Judge Urquhart of Toronto.

At the height of Wallacetown's growth, when gangs of labourers were hired by the railroad contractors, the local hotels and taverns did a roaring trade. There were many fights and so a lockup was built two blocks north of the corners on the east side of the road. It was used until Dutton became incorporated and Wallacetown died. The lockup was moved to the fairground in later years.

Besides the threat of extinction by the coming of the railroads, Wallacetown lost much through fires. In the end it was never rebuilt. In 1877 a grocery store and Masonic Hall were erected along with a hall of justice. The latter was erected by L.W. McIntyre in place of the small one that was moved to Dutton. In 1878, the Wallacetown was erected [sic] and was destroyed by fire in 1889; it was bankrupt at the time. The old frame Anglo-American Hotel also went up in flames. In 1880 the Ontario House and block were razed by fire. In some cases instead of rebuilding, the people relocated in Dutton. In 1885 McBrayne's foundry was consumed by fire and was never rebuilt. This fire took down A. Bowlby's blacksmith shop and carriage business and also the old school. On January 14 or 21, 1886, a fire was discovered at four in the morning in the telegraph office at the rear of Munson's tailor shop. It took with it two other buildings. One was unoccupied. It had been the tailor shop of Peter Gerow. The fire was discovered by Robert Gourley, a butcher, who roused the whole village. The volunteer fire fighters proceeded to tear down the walls of the adjoining buildings to stop the fire from spreading. At the time there was a dance being held in the home of L.W. McIntyre. In 1886 the Wallacetown sawmill was destroyed by fire. It was operated by Mr. McKillop of West Lorne. The mill site was purchased by C. Schliehuff, who rebuilt the mill in 1889. On February 26th the mill and hoop factory went up in flames. The mill had been newly equipped with machinery. The Masonic Lodge, Cameron Lodge No. 232, was founded in Wallacetown in 1870 and had a temple in which to hold their meetings in 1875. It was destroyed by fire in 1886. The lodge was re-established in Dutton. The first grandstand on the fairground was erected by the Schliehuff brothers when they had their mill in Wallacetown. After the big fire, a fine brick block was erected on the southwest corner in 1886. The upper storey became the meeting place of the Independent Order of Foresters. Mr. Monson moved to Dutton and purchased the store of Mr. Urlin. In 1889 a tailor shop was again located in Wallacetown just two doors west of the Ontario House. The hotel was built by John Dromgould, who operated the hotel until 1896, when he sold it to W. Eustes, who later sold it to William Stafford. Later Dromgould repossessed the hotel, and leased it to Mr. Peets of Wallaceburg in 1901.

Wallacetown in 1908 was a much smaller place, as we can see from the list of businesses:

Cusack, William	Postmaster
<i>He was born in Ireland, came to Canada with his parents when he was sixteen years of age and first settled in St. Thomas. He learned the tinsmithing trade and later was foreman of Gurney Stove Manufacturing Company at Hamilton until 1895. Then he moved to Dunwich Township and took up farming. After a time he operated a general store in Wallacetown and became the postmaster after the death of Robert Gunn. He died in 1910 when he was seventy-six years of age.</i>	
Cusack, William	Tinsmith
Cameron, J.A.	General store
Chapman, W.J.	Blacksmith
Keillor, Alvro	Cheese factory
Moss, William	Butcher
Myers, G.E.	Blacksmith
<i>George Myers was born in Glenmeyer and was a blacksmith in Wallacetown for twenty-five years, then moved to Port Burwell and Lambeth. He died in 1922.</i>	
Rapelje, H.J.	Planing mill
Stafford, William	Ontario Hotel
<i>William Stafford purchased the hotel from William Eustes, who took over the Binder House in Rodney in 1896. Originally the hotel was erected by John Dromgould. Stafford turned the hotel over to Mr. Peets of Wallaceburg in 1901.</i>	
Telford, John	Bricks and tiles
Turville, Sidney	Flour mill, north of the corners

The first fair was held in 1860. The West Elgin Agricultural Society was organized on January 16, 1860, at the then flourishing village of New Glasgow. The meeting was called under the authority of Levi Fowler of Fingal, warden of Elgin County, who appointed the following: James E. McKinlay, president; C.A. O'Malley, first vice-president; Malcom McDougall, second vice-president; Colin McDougall, secretary-treasurer, and Daniel McKillop, C.A. O'Malley, Isaac Freeman, Henry D. Smith and Dugald Lamont, directors. The funds of the society were limited, but it joined with the Aldborough society and a united exhibition was held at New Glasgow on October 17, 1860. Twelve judges were appointed to decide between the merits of the few articles on exhibition. Even in those days the directors had an eye to business and enlivened the days by engaging the services of a Highland piper and the St. Thomas brass band. The second exhibition was held in the same place. A total of \$300 was offered in prizes, a decided increase over that of the previous year. But it was felt by the residents of Dunwich, and particularly by the people of Wallacetown, that New Glasgow was not the central spot for holding what promised to be at that early date a prosperous institution and that it must be moved to its eastern rival. The people of Aldborough were against such a change and strongly insisted on the fair remaining where it had been originally established. There was no suitable ground at the eastern rival, but it was decided that the fair must move. On the day of the annual meeting at New Glasgow, the stalwart residents of Dunwich and Southwold invaded Aldborough in droves and elected their own officers. This move took the people of Aldborough by surprise. The minutes of that meeting certainly indicated the ill feelings that existed between the rival factions. George McBeth was elected president by a show of hands, and also in a poll by a majority of 132 votes. A poll was demanded by Aldborough for every officer, but was refused by the chairman. At the next meeting the fair was changed to Wallacetown, where it was held from 1862 to 1866. The Aldborough faction was determined that the fair should return to its home and apparently packed the annual meeting and elected the majority of the officers from that township. The fight was of short duration. After one or more exhibitions at the waning village of New Glasgow, the fair returned to Wallacetown in 1868, where it since has remained. Five acres of the fairground were purchased from J.L. Pearce with an additional five acres purchased later.