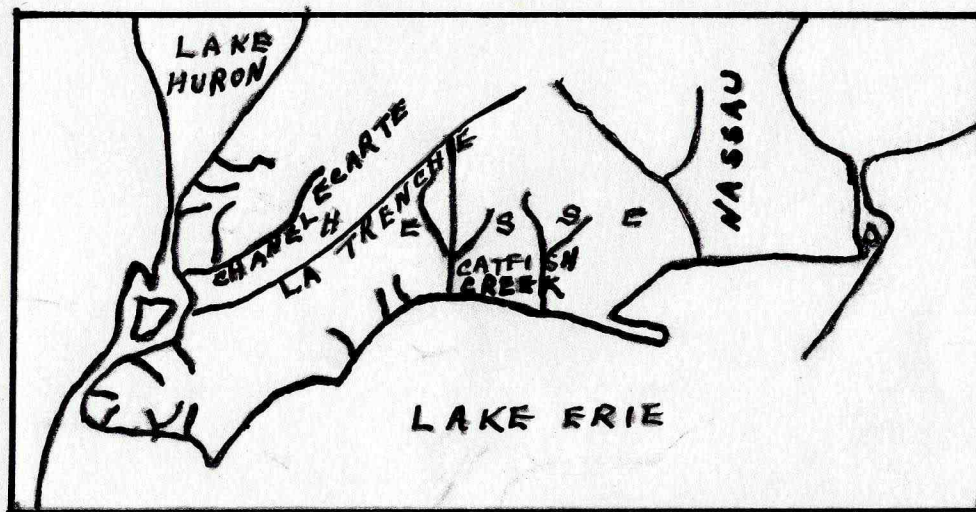


INDIAN SURRENDERS - WESTERN ONTARIO

By the proclamation of George III in 1763, no Indian land could be sold to, or leased by, the white man without a previous treaty between the Indians and the Crown. Hence it was not until this surrender in 1790, that the Chippewas legally gave up their title to this large piece of Southwestern Ontario.

At this point it should be noted that none of the islands in the St. Clair and Detroit Rivers and those lying in Lake Erie at the mouth of the latter stream, were included in this surrender of the Walpole Island Band in 1790.

By J. M. W. in the London Free Press issues of November 28, 1970 and March 27, 1971.



Map marking out the surrender of the Walpole Island Band, May 19, 1790.

COLONEL TALBOT

The history of Elgin cannot be divorced from the life of its founder, Col. Thomas Talbot, whose influence was felt over all the territory now known as Middlesex and Elgin Counties.

Col. Talbot was born in Dublin in 1771. He came from a long line of aristocrats, was a colonel in the 24th British Regiment in Quebec when he was 19, saw service in Holland and Gibraltar during a brief but outstanding military career. In 1791 after the Constitutional Act and the appointment of John Graves Simcoe as governor of Upper Canada, he returned to the wild land for which he had a great fondness and became personal secretary to the governor.

In Dunwich township, Talbot received a grant of 5,000 acres and on May 21, 1803, he landed at a place later known as Port Talbot. He personally chopped down the first tree.

An agreement he had made with the governor was that he was to receive 200 acres of land for every family he could settle, 150 to be retained for himself and 50 to go to the settler. His intention was to invite the Welsh and Scotch people who had arrived in New York in 1801 to settle the area and to cultivate hemp for which the township was well suited.

Talbot was a shrewd colonizer and ruled his territory by equity. Of his own share of the land he sold many acres of land at \$25.00 for 100 acres. Of the settlers he required that they build a house and clear 10 acres of land in order to hold their grants. He also insisted that the settler open the road in front of his land. At Port Talbot a chart was kept on which Talbot penciled in or erased the names of the grantees according to the manner in which they had performed their obligations.

By 1837 Talbot had settled 50,000 people on 650,000 acres of land of which 98,700 acres were cleared. The county changed its names and boundaries many times. The eastern townships of South Dorchester, Malahide and Bayham were once part of Norfolk County. The four other townships, Aldborough, Dunwich, Southwold and Yarmouth were included in a county named Suffolk. These townships later became part of Middlesex, but in 1853 the district was completely separated and was named Elgin after Lord Elgin who settled the Rebellion Losses Bill in 1849.

The pristine beauty of Elgin County has not been changed by modern times. The many streams which run through the county resembles in many ways the land from which the first settlers came originally.

Colonel Talbot died in London, February 6th, 1853, and was buried in the churchyard of St. Peter's Church at Tyrconnel on the shores of Lake Erie which he loved. Around his grave has grown a prosperous district with all the fine highways he envisioned.

THE FOUNDATIONS OF NORTH YARMOUTH

Yarmouth Township was so called after a seaport town in the County of Norfolk, near the boundary of the County of Suffolk and also as a compliment to Francis Seymour or Lord Cornway, who in 1793 was made Earl of Yarmouth.

The original survey of Yarmouth included approximately 71,000 acres of land. However, at various periods it has been deprived of important parts of its original territory by municipal adjustments so that today its area is less than 69,000 acres. The original township included all of what is now the present City of St. Thomas. Until 1881 it extended westerly into the present city to St. Catherine Street and included the unincorporated village of Millersburgh.

1. Political Background:

On the 24th day of July, 1788, Lord Dorchester, the governor of the Colony issued a proclamation dividing the Province of Quebec into five districts. The two most westerly districts were called Nassau and Hesse. Roughly speaking Nassau extended from the Trent River westward to Long Point, while the District of Hesse was the first recognition of the necessity of some system of administration of justice in what is now Western Ontario. At that time the District of Hesse comprehended a very large and undefined territory, the only inhabitants, about 4,000 in number, were in the settlements around Detroit.

Shortly thereafter a vast migration of Loyalists poured into Canada and soon demanded a modification of the lately passed Quebec Act which resulted in the passage of the Constitutional Act in July, 1792, by which act came into being the Provinces of Upper and Lower Canada. Under the authority of the Constitutional Act, Governor Simcoe divided the Province of Upper Canada into nineteen counties, the sixteenth or County of Norfolk was between the Grand River on the east and Catfish Creek on the west and therefore encompassed the present townships of Malahide, Bayham and South Dorchester. The seventeenth or County of Suffolk extended from the west limit of Norfolk to about the location of the present city of Chatham and was bounded on the north by the River Thames. The remainder of the present county (the townships of Yarmouth, Southwold, Dunwich and Aldborough) therefore formed part of the County of Suffolk.

Later in the same year of 1792 the District of Hesse became known as the Western District. The county seat for the new western district was at Detroit--and remained there until the evacuation of the same by the British in 1795. The work of surveying the townships under the direction of the Provincial Government was now being carried on, and during the Second Parliament, held at York in 1798 an act was passed constituting the townships of London, Westminster, Dorchester, Yarmouth, Southwold, Dunwich, Aldborough and Delaware to form the County of Middlesex. Middlesex, along with the recently formed Counties of Norfolk and Oxford (Norfolk still included the present townships of Malahide and Bayham which were then part of Houghton Township, became by Proclamation dated the first day of January, 1800, the District of London. This composed what now forms the Counties of Middlesex, Elgin, Huron, Bruce, Norfolk and Oxford. The London District held its courts and sessions at Charlotteville, Norfolk County, from 1800 to 1802 when they were moved to Turkey Point. In 1815 they again returned to Charlotteville where they remained until established at London.

In 1826 an Act was passed locating the District town in the District of London to a more central location. Governor Simcoe selected the site now enclosed by the present City of London. A plot of four acres was surveyed by Col. Mahlon Burwell in 1826 and in 1828 the new Court House was in use.

In 1837 an Act was passed setting apart the County of Oxford as the District of Brock and the County of Norfolk as the District of Talbot.

In 1798 the present townships of Malahide and Bayham had not been surveyed and were unoccupied territory included within the boundaries of the District of London. They

THE FOUNDATIONS OF NORTH YARMOUTH

were surveyed in 1810 by Mahlon Burwell but not placed in any particular county. In 1837, upon the formation of the Districts of Brock and Talbot these two townships were left as part of the County of Middlesex. The division of the Province into Districts continued until 1849 when a municipal system essentially the same as that which we enjoy today was introduced. This was the beginning of the Township Council system of government.

In 1846 an agitation was commenced which ultimately resulted in 1852 in the separation of the southern townships of the County of Middlesex to form the County of Elgin consisting of the seven townships as they exist at present. The County seat became and still is, St. Thomas.

2. Col. Talbot's relationship to the area:

Any history of this area without mention of Col. Thomas Talbot would be ridiculous. He was, of course, the first and most prominent pioneer figure in the settlement of this part of the province. He is commonly referred to as the founder of the Talbot Settlement, and this is correct in that he was early on the ground, that he acquired the right to allot land to those who came after him and that he did so in his own peculiar way. In the matter of securing actual settlers, however, he showed very little initiative. He welcomed those who came, if they were of the right type; he used his influence to secure the building of roads which were of the greatest advantage in facilitating settlement; he had the lands surveyed well in advance of the arrival of the pioneer farmers and he steadily added to his own holdings. His desire to accumulate a great landed estate was doubtless one of the influences which led him to give up military and court life to enter upon the life of a frontiersman.

In 1793, Talbot, in company with Governor John Graves Simcoe, made a journey to the western part of the province. On this trip which extended as far to the west as Detroit, Talbot envisioned his future settlement.

The country which he fancied so strongly was as it is today one of the most fertile parts of the province. It was at that time covered with a dense forest and traversed by many small streams. The climate was moderated somewhat by the presence of the great fresh-water lakes, which also proved a convenient means of communication.

Talbot retired from the army in 1800 and early in 1801 he returned to Canada with the object of securing a township for himself. As a retired officer he was entitled to a grant of 5,000 acres of land. What Talbot actually desired was that he should receive his grant, if possible, in the township of Yarmouth. The remainder of the township he wished placed in his hands for him to settle with people whom he could personally select. For each settler placed on a plot of 50 acres he would receive 150 acres for himself "for the expense and trouble of collecting and locating them." If he could secure Yarmouth, he shrewdly considered his fortune made.

Unfortunately for Talbot he was soon to find out that most of the southern portion of Yarmouth which he had regarded so favourably, had in 1799 been turned over to the Baby family for their services to the Crown, and of the northern portion 4,000 acres was to be appropriated to the Canada Company--an organization of wealthy English gentlemen who were allowed to purchase hundreds of thousands of acres of land at about one shilling an acre for the purposes of speculation. Talbot was forced therefore to look elsewhere for his lands and his second choice was Dunwich township further west.

Under the arrangement authorized by the Colonial Office, Talbot would have been enabled to secure 15,000 acres above his officer's grant. However, that there was a difference between theory and practice is quite evident when it is recalled that before retiring from active life, Talbot had control of more than 60,000 acres of land and had practically defied attempts of the provincial administration to interfere with his rule in his miniature kingdom.

THE FOUNDATIONS OF NORTH YARMOUTH

As Talbot was anxious to control all unalotted areas to the east, particularly in Yarmouth, during 1809 and part of 1810, at his insistence a survey of Talbot Road east was completed by Col. Burwell through the townships of Southwold, Yarmouth and Houghton, and in 1810 Talbot was empowered to select settlers for this new road. The southern portion of Yarmouth, including the Baby lands, was surveyed as early as 1799 by James Augustus Jones and in 1812 Talbot set out some draft layouts for the remaining lands in Southwold, Yarmouth and Houghton to be surveyed by Col. Burwell. Burwell commenced this survey in Yarmouth, north of those lands previously surveyed by Jones in 1799. This survey due to the War of 1812 and other factors was not completed until 1819.

In 1811 Talbot had proposed to the Lieutenant-Governor that all the unreserved and unlocated lots in Yarmouth should be put under his supervision, which proposal was consented to. Talbot was to be furnished with a list of such vacant lots in Yarmouth which were to be reserved for persons recommended by him. Official confirmation of Talbot's superintendence of Yarmouth was not forth-coming however until 1816.

3. The early settlement:

Immediately following the opening of Talbot Road East the settlers began to take up lots on either side of the road. The first who arrived in 1810 was Daniel Rapelje who took up Lot No. 1, Concession 8. Shortly thereafter along the north side of Talbot Road came Garret Smith, Thomas Curtis, George Lawrence, Daniel Berdan, Joseph Mann, Richard Mizener, James and Silas Toles and Major James Nevills. All these pioneers had settled prior to 1820 in what is now the City of St. Thomas. Those who took up lots east of St. Thomas to Orwell were: Finlay Grant, Samuel Yorke, Wm. S. Yorke, John T. Woolley, James Brown, Hiram Lee, David Brush, Richard Grinnell, Garret Oakes (n.w. corner at New Sarum) Abraham House, Josephus Barber, Aaron Spurgeon, Stephen Barton, David Secord Jun., and the Gilbert family. All these settlers were located before 1820.

Fifty years later, in 1870, of the original settlers along the north side of Talbot Road only three were still on the land they received from the Crown. These were Garret Oakes on Lot 20, Abraham House on Lot 21 and David Secord on Lot 25. However the Mann, Misner, and Yorke families were still on their respective lots.

An interesting picture of life in these pioneer days is left to posterity by Barret Oakes who many years afterwards when he was an old man wrote his reminiscences in the London Free Press. He related--

"The first act of a settler was with axe in hand to select a spot on which to erect a shanty; then felling the huge trees to a circumference that others could not reach the building when erected; then the timber had to be cut, piled and burned to form a starting point for further improvement. The shanties were uniformly built of logs with elm bark for roof and floor. Then came the furniture which was invariably of home manufacture. The bedstead was made of poles with bark taken off and basswood bark for bedcord, and the tools for its construction were an axe and an auger. The table leaf was made from a piece of wood two inches thick, split from the centre of a large log, and holes made with a two inch auger to receive the legs; the seats were tripods, the material and workmanship the same as the table. Cradles were ready for use by putting rockers to a sap-trough. I knew one family where the same sap-trough served to rock four of their babes in succession. The mortar was indispensable in each family. This article was made by cutting a log three feet long and 15 inches in diameter. The log then stood on end and a fire kept burning in the centre till it formed a bowl-shaped con-cavity to hold ten or twelve quarts. Into this a quart of corn was put and with a heavy wooden pestle pounded to the required degree of fineness, which process had to be repeated morning, noon and night - or go without the indispensable johnny cake."

The settler whose remarks have just been quoted gives the prices of goods during the early days of the settlement, when there was no store west of Long Point, and but one there;