

# London East

London East, unlike London North was not part of the Crown Reserve at the Forks of the Thames. It grew out of a swamp known as Priest's Swamp, due to the close proximity of a priest's house situated on its eastern boundary.

The preliminary survey was undertaken by Abraham Iredell in 1796, but it was not until Mahlon Burwell in 1810 that a complete survey was completed. The boundaries of London East were set at the Thames River to the south, Oxford Street to the north, Adelaide Street on the west, and Highbury Avenue on the east.

The largest land owner was the Church of England (Diocese of Huron); and this land covered the area south of Dundas to Trafalgar, and east from Adelaide to Rectory. In 1857, this land was put up for sale, and by the 1880s all the land was sold.

The history of London East begins in 1851 when Murray Anderson purchased a lot on the northeast corner of Adelaide and Dundas. Anderson's home was the first brick house in London East and the only brick house east of Burwell Street. Anderson also gained fame as the first mayor of the newly incorporated City of London. Anderson was a dealer of tin ware, and he constructed a large iron foundry on the southwest corner of Adelaide and Dundas, now the site of London Police Headquarters. Anderson's foundry, the Globe, gave rise to the London East community and initiated the area's industrial history. The employees of the Globe, wanting to be close to work, built their homes close to the workplace. They bought cheap, small lots from land speculators.

The London East of today is vastly different from the London East of yesterday, and the people of today will find little to indicate that it was once a busy industrial suburb.

As important as the Globe foundry was, it was the oil industry which made London East such a prominent place. The first oil wells in North America were located in Lambton County in 1857. The refineries were located in Woodstock in Oxford County, but they were so far away, so in 1863 William Spencer and his partner, Herman Waterman, moved their entire operation to London East. The earliest refinery was built on the east side of Adelaide, south of the Great Western tracks and Bathurst Street, on the present site of the City Works Department.

Business rapidly expanded and other refineries joined Spencer and Waterman. Among the more prominent were Duffield Bros. (Forest City Refinery), Stedwell & Co., L.C. Leonard, Burns & Co., and Bailey, Duffield and Co. The first use of the crude petroleum was lamp oil because little capital was required for the industry. Technological advances soon resulted in the smaller producers being pushed out, and in 1876 six of the larger companies formed the London Oil Refining Company. Each company continued to operate independently but all profits were pooled.

The largest competitor to the London Oil Refining Company was Silver Star Works, built in 1870 by Englehart, Guggenheim & Co. The significance of American involvement in the oil

industry is represented by the presence of Jacob L. Englehart, an Ohio native, and Isaac Guggenheim, a member of the famous entrepreneurial family from New York City.

Eventually the oil refiners realized that in union lay strength, and largely due to William Spencer and Frederick A. Fitzgerald, “the rival groups combined forces on April 30, 1880, to carry on trade and business ‘under the name and firm of Imperial Oil Company’...”. The old Silver Star Refinery on Bathurst Street, became Imperial Oil’s sole London East refinery.

The stability and prosperity of Imperial Oil was grievously halted on July 11, 1883, when lightning struck the Imperial Oil refinery and the entire premises were destroyed by fire. Leery of further fires and inadequate fire protection the company rebuilt in Petrolia.

The presence of the oil industry and supporting secondary industries established industry as the economic mainstay of the community and attracted a considerable population of factory workers. From 1856 until 1864, the population had grown to 500 people. By the time the community amalgamated with London proper, the population had risen to 2,000.

Months of internal wrangling led up to the amalgamation of London East, due to anti-amalgamationists fearing extra taxes and loss of London East’s uniqueness. The amalgamation committee finally came to terms, and the amalgamation of London East and London was formally effected on August 20, 1885. With amalgamation, London East received water from the Springbank Waterworks, police and fire protection, street improvements, and the rebuilding of the G.T.R. Car Shops, which had been destroyed by fire on September 21, 1884.

During the amalgamation, London banned all oil refineries because of heavy pollutants, and encouraged cleaner industries such as breweries and financial institutions. Until recent years, businesses stretched along Dundas Street, but a recognizable business district grew up on the corner of Adelaide and Dundas, known as Lilley’s Corners. Charles Lilley’s block of businesses appeared as early as 1864, and other businesses soon followed, including the Anderson Block, erected on the north side of Dundas by Murray Anderson.

By 1912, London East had expanded considerably and took in the suburbs of Ealing, Pottersburg and Knollwood Park in London Township, and Chelsea Green in Westminster Township. In all, 2,200 acres were added to the city in the 1912 annexation. Ealing and Pottersburg had extended London East eastwards beyond Highbury and south from Oxford Street to the south branch of the Thames. These two suburbs were largely residential, but sparsely settled.

Knollwood Park consisted of a triangular piece of land north of Oxford to Cheapside and east from Adelaide to Linwood Street. A major part the area was occupied by St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Cemetery on the south side of St. James Street. The major reason for the annexation was to provide Sunday street car service.

Pottersburg took its name from the Glass Brothers. & Co. Pottery around which the hamlet developed. The firm specialized in the manufacture of salt-glaze stoneware, and Rockingham and Bristol ware. The business survived a fire in 1895, but was destroyed by another fire in 1897. Workers had built their cottages around the factory, and a post office named Pottersburg,

and a blacksmith shop were also built in the area. Since the 1961 annexation the small hamlet has been obliterated by commercial and residential development

Ealing, Pottersburg, and Knollwood Park all received fire and police protection, city sewage, street lightning, hydro power, and eventually paved streets, sidewalks, curbs, and gutters.

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