

The History of Lambeth

The Village of Lambeth has been known by a number of different names: *Wahoo*, an Indian name, *The Junction*, because it was located at the junction of two crossroads; *St. Andrews*, the name given on Westminster Township Plan No. 27, dated June 18, 1853; *Lambeth*, at the request of the Post Master, John Chalmers, the name was changed from “Westminster” by which name mail had been received. This change was authorized by the Post Office Inspector, Gilbert E. Griffith, March, 1857. *Slab Town* was a nick name given because of the planked roads.

Among the first white settlers was Abraham Patrick who came from Niagara Falls, in 1809, after obtaining 200 acres of land, Lot 71, West Talbot Road. His house, the first to be built in Lambeth, was on the east side of the Dingman Creek. He is credited with cutting the road down the winding hill into Byron. Another settler was Jeremiah Schram who came to Lambeth, after a brief sojourn in Delaware, in 1810 or 1811. In 1826 he bequeathed the northeast corner of his property for a burying ground and a place of worship.

The first parish register was started in 1856 by Reverend D. Fraser. The date on Trinity Church is 1863. Religion was very important to the early settlers and records show that Reverend Nathan Banks received consent from the Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church of New York to set up a ministry in a settlement near Detroit. The first recorded church meeting in the area was Delaware.

Lambeth United Church evolved from a Methodist background when it became part of the Westminster circuit in 1818. The first circuit rider, or minister, was Reverend John Hamilton. There were three Methodist churches - Episcopal, Wesleyan, and the Bible Christian Church. The Wesleyan Methodists met first in 1818 in a log schoolhouse on the west side of Talbot Road, with Calvin Burch as teacher, and the only textbook was the Bible. When the Wesleyan Church was built it was on the east side of Talbot Road, just north of the main intersection.

The Episcopal Church was just across the corner on the property of Albert Evans. In 1884, a union was formulated among the branches of Methodism to become the Methodist Church of Canada. Following the union services were held in the former Episcopal building, and the Wesleyan building was used as a Church Hall.

The first Post Office (Westminster) was established February 6th, 1840, and operated under two names, Westminster and Lambeth. The first office was on the north side of Main Street about 300 feet west of North Talbot Road.

Doctors who practiced in the early years included Dr. J. McLennan, Dr. George A. Routledge and his son Dr. Roy Routledge. One of the oldest organizations in Lambeth was the St. Paul's Masonic Lodge, No. 107. Its first meeting was held in 1858 in the gable room of the Malcolm McGregor Hotel. A Masonic Hall was built in 1878 a little further north on Talbot Road and served the Lodge until the property was sold to the Village of Lambeth in 1967.

The first bank in Lambeth was the Sovereign Bank and was located in one corner of the Union Hall. It opened in 1910 and went broke shortly afterwards. In 1857, George Kelley, known familiarly as "Pop" Kelley bought property on the northwest corner of the Crossroads on which he built a store, with an adjoining house. George became Post Master in 1865 and the Post Office was in one corner of the store. He held the office until his death in 1900 when his son, James A. Kelley, took over.

William Arthur purchased property bounded by the road to London and the Mill Road, in 1876, and opened a saw mill to cut the lumber used to build the mill in 1877. The slabs from the logs possibly gave the little village the nickname of "Slab Town".

Henry Hamly, came to Canada from Devonshire, England at the age of eight with his parents. He learned the trade of flour-milling at Saunby's Mill in London. In 1871, he married and lived in Fergus for 11 years but he returned to Lambeth in 1889. He purchased the former Arthur Mill, remodelled the buildings and put in modern equipment, including a stone mill for grinding flour.

Reflections of Westminster Township, 1982