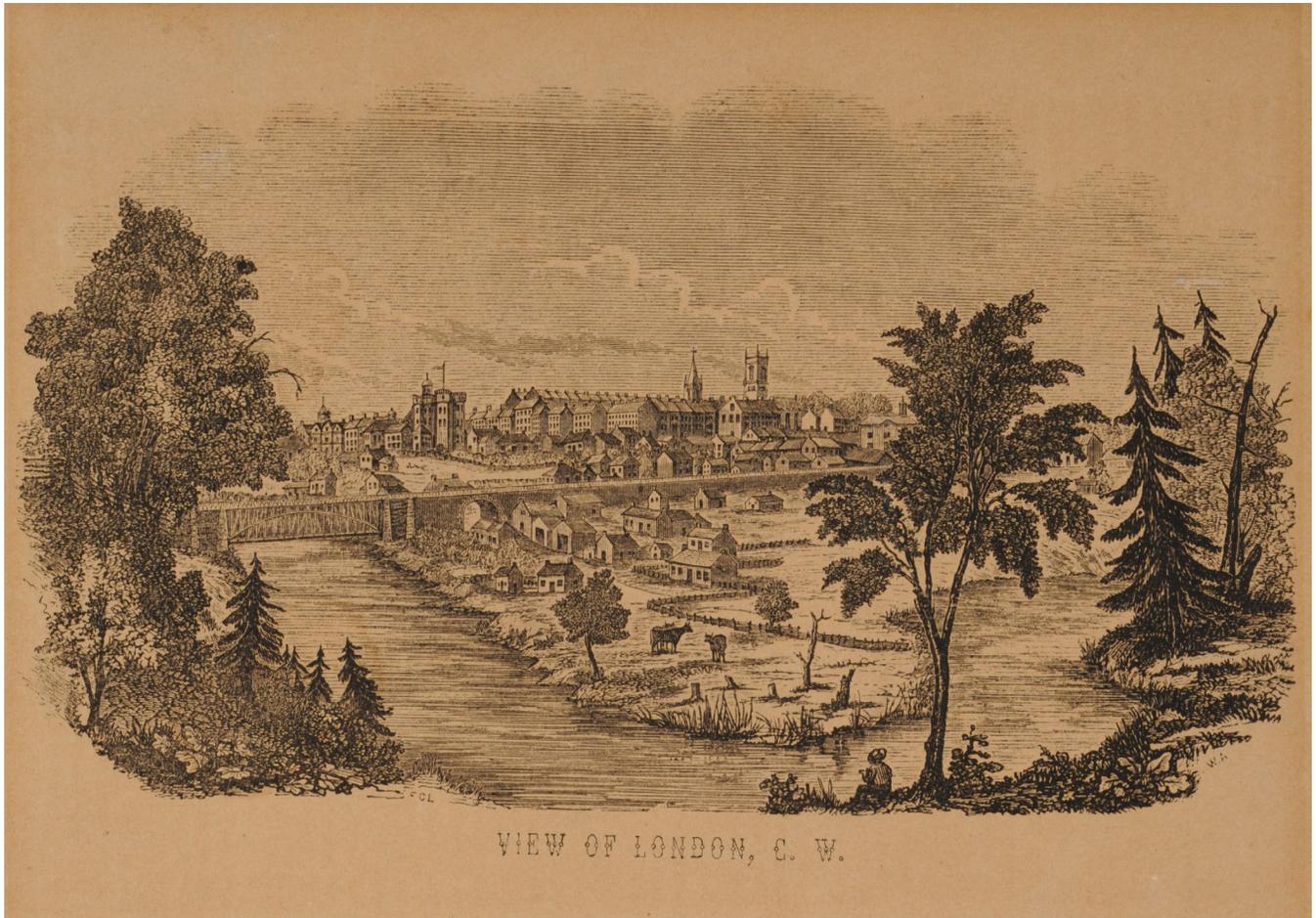


# The London and Middlesex

2022

# HISTORIAN

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Cover image: View of London, C.W. 1853,  
by William Armstrong (Canadian 1822-1914).

The original is an engraving on paper (11 x 17.8 cm) received in 1949 as an anonymous gift to the Museum London Collection. The scene depicts the downtown core area of London viewed from, what is today, near the corner of Wortley Road and Beaconsfield Avenue.

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## The London and Middlesex Historical Society

The London and Middlesex Historical Society was established in 1901 to promote awareness in the local heritage of London and Middlesex County. The aims of the Society are to encourage research, discussion, presentation and the publication of local history topics. The Society is affiliated with the Ontario Historical Society and also works with other community cultural and heritage organizations.

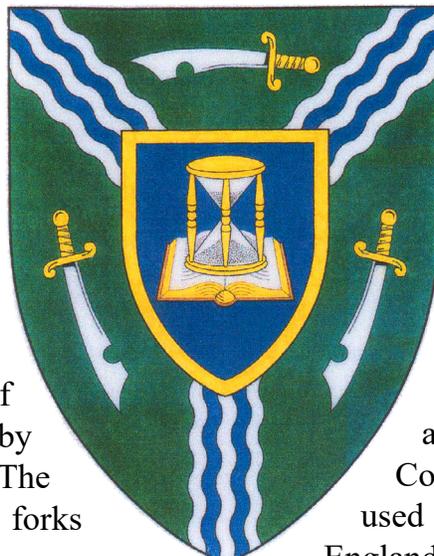
Awareness of local history is actively promoted through education, public meetings, tours, and demonstrations, and by encouraging young people to learn about and appreciate the past. The Society provides support and encouragement of historical research and the preservation of materials and memorabilia, relating to the heritage of the region. Working with community partners, the Society encourages the identification and preservation of historically and architecturally valuable buildings, sites and areas.

Membership is open to anyone with an interest in the Society's objectives and activities. Annual membership includes free admission to meetings, special tours and presentations as well as materials published by the Society.

### Heraldic Shield

The London and Middlesex Historical Society's heraldic shield was created in 1992. Unveiled on Canada Day, it was designed by Guy St-Denis with the assistance of Roger Gardiner and rendered by Rob Turner.

The background green colour of the outer shield was inspired by the county's forests and farms. The Y-shaped device represents the forks of the River Thames in London.



The combination of alternating silver and blue stripes is a standard heraldic stylization for water. The hour glass on the book, which is set in a blue inner shield, is a conceptualization of history. Contrary to popular belief, the Saxon swords do not illustrate a growing militarism within the Society; rather, they are borrowed from the Middlesex County shield and are frequently used in coats of arms from southern England.

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# The Settling of Middlesex County in the 1830s through the 1850s

Marvin L. Simner

## Introduction

The need to attract settlers to Southwestern Ontario in the 1830s resulted, at least in part, from a growing fear that if the land bordering Lake Erie remained largely unoccupied it could be absorbed into regions to the south of the Great Lakes and ultimately become part of the United States. Indeed, this fear was not unfounded. As late as 1827 the overall population of Middlesex County, which at the time reached Lake Erie and was somewhat larger in area than today, was only 9,838.<sup>1</sup> In addition, there was considerable sympathy among certain segments of the population for a republican form of government similar to that which had been established in the United States following the American Revolution.

Conflicts arose between commercial and agrarian interests, between elected representatives of the people and members of the government appointed by the Lieutenant-Governor, and between different religious groups. Strong opinions were held on the relationship of Canada to Britain and to the United States, on the kind of schools to be established, on the system of granting land, in short on the nature of the society being formed. All of these issues were fought out within a political framework created by the Constitutional Act of 1791. By the 1830s, it seemed to have become inadequate to solve the problem and (the problem) itself became a source of bitter controversy.<sup>2</sup>

One of the most outspoken critics of the Constitutional Act was William Lyon Mackenzie. In addition to being mayor of Toronto, Mackenzie was elected as a pro-American reformer to the House of Assembly in Upper Canada. He was also the owner of a widely read newspaper. As an illustration of his stand on this matter, on November 15, 1837 he published, in the form of an editorial, a draft of a constitution that he felt should replace the Constitutional Act of 1791. The wording in the preamble to Mackenzie's suggested constitution and the wording in the preamble to the U.S. Constitution is indeed striking.

### Preamble to Mackenzie's constitution

We, the people of the State of Upper Canada...in order to establish justice, ensure domestic tranquillity, provide for the common defence, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of civil and religious liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do establish this Constitution.<sup>3</sup>

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This report is an updated version of material previously prepared for Fanshaw Pioneer Village.

Preamble to the Constitution of the United States

We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, ensure domestic Tranquillity, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessing of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

Shortly after the appearance of his editorial, Mackenzie issued a proclamation urging an armed uprising against the government of Upper Canada. While the Rebellion of 1837 was short lived, the very fact that it took place encouraged the British Parliament to further its longstanding goal, which began soon after the American Revolutionary War (1775-1783), of seeking immigrants to Upper Canada who would favour the British over the American system of government.

How was this goal to be accomplished? The first person charged with settling the area bordering Lake Erie with British sympathizers was Colonel Thomas Talbot. Although Colonel Talbot is usually given credit for settling this area, his approach to attracting settlers, which started around 1803, was largely passive.

For several years there were no settlers or other inhabitants (on his land other) than his own hired men. In order to supply this deficiency, he distributed large placards to attract settlers, which had the effect of bringing a great many people into the settlements, but many of these turned out to be very worthless characters.<sup>4</sup>

In fact, Talbot's early plan to colonize the land was merely to "introduce himself to the body of Welsh and Scotch who arrived in New York in 1801 and win them over."<sup>5</sup> Perhaps because of this approach a number of the early settlers on the Talbot Tract were from the United States and their allegiance to the Crown was often suspect. For example, the Quakers who settled around Sparta "were considered by many Canadians to be very republican in their political ideas (and some were even) personally involved in the radical reform events of the 1830s."<sup>6</sup> As a "major corporate rival" of Colonel Talbot,<sup>7</sup> the Canada Land Company, founded in 1826, made use of a much more aggressive and systematic approach to attracting people, who, it was hoped would be sympathetic to the British cause.

In Part I that follows, we discuss the purpose of the Company, the role played by John Galt in organizing the Company, the nature of the immigrants desired by the Crown, and the methods used by the Company to attract these immigrants. To fully understand the experiences of the immigrants who settled this area we also describe the sea voyage for those who travelled in steerage as well as for those with sufficient funds to travel as cabin passengers. We conclude with the arrangements made by the Crown and the Company to assist the newly arrived immigrants to find jobs and/or to purchase land. In Part II we focus on the education of children. Aside from the need to establish

some form of school system in the 1830s-1850s Upper Canada was also faced with a proliferation of American textbooks that, it was feared, might lead to a resurgence of the Mackenzie Rebellion. Here we discuss the steps that were taken to curb this possibility.

### **Part I - The Canada Land Company**

The attempt by the British Crown to settle Middlesex County and the surrounding area was accomplished using the same procedures that had been followed in settling portions of Crown land elsewhere in British North America prior to the American Revolution. In 1609, for instance, a Royal Charter was granted by the House of Commons to a private group of shareholders who formed the London Company to settle what are now portions of Virginia. Similarly, Massachusetts was settled by another group of private shareholders who formed the Massachusetts Bay Company through a Royal Charter granted in 1629.<sup>8</sup> Each of these privately owned companies was formed by wealthy land speculators with the intention of generating a profit by eventually selling the land they had initially purchased from the Crown.

Thus it is not surprising that in attempting to settle the southwestern portion of Upper Canada, legislation was introduced in the British House of Commons in 1825 to create the Canada Land Company, which also consisted of a private group of shareholders.<sup>9</sup> Governed by a Court of Directors, the Company had acquired from the Crown approximately 2.5 million acres scattered throughout what was then Western Canada. While about 1.5 million acres was divided into smaller lots of 200 acres apiece, there were also larger parcels or blocks of around 3000 to 9000 acres. The largest single block consisted of one million acres. Known as the Huron Tract, this block was roughly triangular in shape and extended from Lake Huron through much of present-day Huron and Perth County as well as through portions of Lambton and Middlesex County.

The Company also owned many individual lots in the London District, which encompassed not only Middlesex County, but Oxford County and Norfolk County and extended as far north as Georgian Bay and as far south as the Talbot Tract on Lake Erie. The Company's land also included lots in the Western District, which bordered Lake St. Clair and the Detroit River, as well as in the Gore District in the east which was located around Guelph.<sup>10</sup> In short, the Company had acquired most of the property throughout Southwestern Ontario (see the map on the next page) and between October 1828 and April 1829, the Company had already placed settlers in six of the 17 townships in Middlesex County,<sup>11</sup> four of which were located along Lake Erie in the Talbot Tract (Southwold, Yarmouth, Malahide, Bayham).

From the Crown's perspective, the most desirable settlers were not only farmers who would "til the soil" and build the roads, but others with sufficient funds to erect mills and establish inns. Also required were artisans such as stone-masons, saddlers, shoemakers, tailors, and blacksmiths,

to name a few of the necessary skilled occupations.<sup>12</sup> In other words, the Crown wanted people who would remain loyal to the Empire and who would help to create permanent, thriving rural communities.



Southwestern Ontario circa 1835 (courtesy of the Western University Archives (RC#921))

John Galt, the first secretary to the Canada Land Company, was the person largely responsible for developing the procedures to attract appropriate settlers to this area. Prior to arriving in Upper Canada, Galt visited the Holland Land Company that had been established some 30 years earlier in Batavia, New York. Owing to the success of this company, the purpose of his visit was to learn how to recruit enterprising immigrants.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, the information he obtained during his visit formed the groundwork for the policies that the Canada Land Company was to follow during its first twenty years of existence.

Galt encouraged immigration in a number of ways. He established agencies in Quebec (City) and Montreal to assist prospective settlers who initially landed in Lower Canada, to eventually arrive in Upper Canada. He also established agencies throughout England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland to promote immigration through an extensive advertising campaign. For example, the Company printed large posters that were mounted in prominent locations throughout the British Isles, the purpose of which was to address the most commonly cited concerns voiced by farmers contemplating emigration. While some of the topics dealt with taxation, the costs of purchasing land, live stock and erecting buildings, others focused on opportunities for religious worship and schooling, whether wild beasts were “troublesome to new settlers” and even “The probable expense of supporting a Family of five or six grown persons until they could get sufficient from the Land to support themselves.”<sup>14</sup>

Further posters encouraged immigration by providing an extremely favourable impression of farm life in Upper Canada. The following is from an 1832 poster housed in the Western University Archives (RC#921).

#### *Climate*

*On comparison with the climate of Great Britain, the heat in the summer months is somewhat greater, but never oppressive, as it is always accompanied with light breezes. There is less rain than in England, but it falls at more regular periods, generally in spring and autumn. The winter cold, though it exceeds that of the British Isles, is the less sensibly felt, in consequence of its dryness, and seldom continues intense for more than three days together, owing to the regular fluctuation of the wind between the north-west and south-west points...It is hardly necessary to state that in a country so overspread with timber there can never be a deficiency of fuel...*

#### *Soil*

*Perhaps there does not exist in any quarter of the globe, a country of the extent of Upper Canada, containing so small a quantity of waste land, either of marsh or mountain, yet there is not any deficiency of water; for, independently of the numerous rivers and streams which flow through the country on every side, good springs are universally found either on the surface or by digging for them...*

#### *Agriculture*

*All the fruits and herbs, common to the English kitchen-garden, thrive well in this province; and several of the former, which cannot in all seasons be had in perfection in England*

*without forcing, succeed there in the open air; melons, in particular, which are excellent. There is also great variety of apples, pears, plums, etc, of the finest quality which are known to European orchards...After wheat, which is generally harvested in the month of July and the beginning of August, rye can be sown on the same ground in the autumn to advantage; the rye crop is frequently laid down with clover or grass seed, which, unless the farmer is pressed for ground, will continue to furnish good meadow and pasture for four or five years...*

Along with posters, the Company also promoted immigration in other ways. First, the Court of Directors subsidized and made available throughout the British Isles a number of pamphlets and books produced in London, England, that described in some detail the advantages of immigrating to Upper Canada.<sup>15</sup> Second, the Company provided free postage to Britain for settlers who wished to correspond with their relatives at home. Because many of the immigrants were illiterate and depended on others to write for them, not all of the letters were produced by the persons who were said to have been the authors. Owing to the possibility that some might even be forged, certain precautions were sometimes taken before the immigrants departed.

Probably the favourite measure was to tear off a corner of a sheet of paper which could be left behind to be matched up with the first letter received. They also carried with them signed pages, pages with a portion cut off through a signature, and a variety of agreed tokens, seals, and signs to include in a letter from Upper Canada.<sup>16</sup>

How many of the letters contained the true views of the authors, of course, remains unknown. To obtain this free postage service the settlers had to leave their letters with the Company's agents, who in turn, often selected the most promising for distribution in England as still another form of advertising.

The Canada Company published over 20,000 copies of letters from Canadian settlers to the Motherland...It is quite possible that this was the most effective advertising that the Company used. People could relate more easily to the words of their former neighbours than to a more pretentious poster.<sup>17</sup>

In addition to advertising material, the Company also made use of further agents supplied by the Crown who were stationed in the major ports of embarkation. Their duties were to arrange transportation and to provide any other assistance deemed necessary.<sup>18</sup> As a general guide the Company issued the following poster in 1835 with the names and locations of the agents along with travelling and packing information (Western University Archives, RC#921).

*His Majesty's Government, with a view of affording protection and assistance to Emigrants proceeding from the Outpost, have appointed the following Agents:*

*Liverpool.....Lieut. Low, R.N*  
*Bristol.....Lieut. Henry, R.N*  
*Leith.....Lieut. Forrest, R.N.*  
*Greenock.....Lieut. Hemmans, R.N.*  
*Dublin.....Lieut. Hodder, R.N.*  
*Cork.....Lieut. Lynch, R.N.*  
*Limerick.....Lieut, Lynch, R.N.*  
*Belfast.....Lieut. Miller, R.N.*  
*Sligo.....Lieut. Shuttleworth, R.N.*

*It is expedient that the Emigrant should embark early in the spring, that he may have the summer before him, and leisure to settle his family comfortably before the winter sets in. Great improvements have taken place in the mode of conveying the Emigrants up the St. Lawrence from Montreal within the last two years, by which the hardships and privations formerly suffered on that route are avoided (for a description of the hardships see below), and they may now have covered conveyances all the way, for a very moderate addition to the old charges. They have now, also, the option of taking the route by the Ottawa and the Rideau Canal, by which a saving of time is effected at a small additional expense.*

*The ordinary baggage of Emigrants consists of their wearing apparel, with such bedding, and utensils for cooking, as may be required on the voyage, and any articles of clothing, not intended to be used at sea, ought to be packed in water-tight cases or trunks, not exceeding eighty or ninety pounds in weight.*

Perhaps because of this aggressive campaign, emigration from the British Isles rose substantially over the years. Whereas in 1829 only 13,307 people set sail for British North America, by 1832 the number had reached 66,339.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, as testimony to the overall success of recruiting largely from the British Isles, the number of immigrants from England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales who settled in Middlesex County, according to the 1880-81 census, was approximately 150,000, while the next highest number was only around 8,000 from Germany.<sup>20</sup>

It is useful to note, however, that in 1832 the Crown also considered it necessary to issue the following cautionary notice so as not to mislead any prospective emigrants. Although the reason is not entirely clear, perhaps the Crown felt that the wording in the Company's many posters, books and pamphlets may have conveyed a somewhat misleading impression, especially with regard to the possibility of free land, financial aid, etc.

*The object of the present Notice is to afford such information as is likely to be useful to Persons who desire either to Emigrate, or to assist others to Emigrate, to the British Possessions in North America.*

*In the first place, it seems desirable to define the nature of the assistance to be expected from Government by Persons proceeding to these colonies. No pecuniary aid will be allowed by Government to Emigrants to the North American Colonies; nor after their arrival will they receive Grants of Land, or gifts of Tools, or a supply of Provisions. Hopes of all these things have been sometimes held out to Emigrants by Speculators in this Country, desirous of making a profit by their conveyance to North America, and willing for that purpose to delude them with unfounded expectations, regardless of their subsequent disappointment.*

*Land, indeed, used formerly to be granted gratuitously; but when it was taken by poor people, they found that they had not the means of living during the interval necessary to raise their Crops, and further, they knew not enough of the manner of farming in the Colonies to make any progress ...therefore, they were obliged to work for wages, until they could make a few savings, and could learn a little of the way of farming in Canada...now land is not disposed of except by sale.*

*These are the reasons why Government does not think it necessary to give away Land in a Country, where by the lowness of its price, the plentifulness of work, and high rates of wages, an industrious Man can earn enough in a few Seasons to become a freeholder by means of his own acquisitions.*

*Although Government will not make any gifts at the Public expense to Emigrants to North America, Agents will be maintained at the principle Colonial Ports, whose duty it will be, without fee or reward from private individuals...to acquaint them with the demand for labour in different districts, to point out the most advantageous routes, and to furnish them generally with all useful advice upon the objects which they have had in view in emigrating. And when a private engagement cannot be immediately obtained, employment will be afforded on some of the Public Works in progress in the Colonies. Persons newly arrived should not omit to consult the Government Agent for Emigrants, and as much as possible should avoid detention in the Ports, where they are exposed to all kinds of imposition and of pretexts for keeping them at Taverns till any money they may possess has been expended.<sup>21</sup>*

## **The Ocean Voyage**

Once the decision was made to emigrate, appropriate travel arrangements were now required. The ocean voyage from the British Isles to North America in the 1830s-1850s was accomplished

largely by steamship, though sailing ships were still in use. The voyage via sailing ship to either Montreal or New York normally lasted six to seven weeks, whereas steamships were considerably faster. In 1838, for example, the Great Western steamship left Bristol in the south of England on April 8th and arrived in New York only 15 days later.<sup>22</sup>

Many emigrants destined for Upper Canada preferred New York over Montreal as their initial destination even though travel from England to the port of New York was more costly.<sup>23</sup> The reason was that ships arrived at New York somewhat sooner than Montreal and travel from New York to Upper Canada through Buffalo by train or boat along the Erie Canal was more comfortable and faster than travel from Montreal, as the following description of such a trip suggests. The description is from a letter written by Mrs. J. Burchell who made the trip in 1832.

From Montreal we were taken in a Canadian Batteau to Lachine (Quebec) fastened on to a Steamer and crossed Lake St Frances to the Island of Cedars, where we waited 3 days for horses to commence our journey up the rapids of 140 miles, which took us 5 days; at times drawn by horses but at the west parts by oxen, this was a most fatiguing part of our journey as we were obliged to walk a good deal at the dangerous parts of them, the water at some places flowing at such a rapid rate, it was unsafe to pass through in a boat, we travelled by day and encamped in the woods or barns at night, whichever was most convenient.<sup>24</sup>

Depending on their finances, passengers made the ocean voyage either in steerage or in a cabin. While the fare to cross the Atlantic varied considerably as a function of the shipping line, the nature of the vessel, as well as the accommodations, in 1832 the average cost for an adult in steerage was four pounds, whereas for someone in a cabin it was 15 pounds. To appreciate the significance of these fares, the cost to travel in steerage was nearly equal to the wage a person eventually might earn after two months of farm labour in Ontario.<sup>25</sup> If a passenger wished to reside in a cabin, the cost would be nearly equal to eight months farm labour. Because the experiences of both groups were exceedingly different, we begin with a brief description of travel in steerage, followed by a brief description of travel in a private cabin.

### **Steerage Passengers**

The passengers who travelled in steerage from England to North America in the early 1800s were mainly carpenters, shoemakers, etc. who paid their own way, as well as unemployed farm workers and labourers who were aided by parish sponsors. Of the many parish sponsors in southwest England, one of the most thoroughly researched is the Petworth Emigration Committee in Sussex. They were responsible for sending nearly 2000 emigrants to the southwestern portion of Upper Canada between 1832 and 1837, a number of whom established homesteads in Adelaide Township in the western part of Middlesex County.<sup>26</sup>



**Pioneer homestead on Lot 15 in Adelaide Township.**

*Courtesy of the Western University Archives (RC#10005)*

Though outwardly humanitarian, the ultimate concern of this committee, founded by the Reverend Thomas Sockett, Rector of Petworth, was to help rid England of the growing population of the unemployed which, it was said, if left unchecked, would lead to increased crime coupled with increased taxation on the wealthy through the poor law regulations of 1834. Sockett's concern over crime was perhaps best expressed in a letter to a member of Parliament which outlined his views on the children of the unemployed.

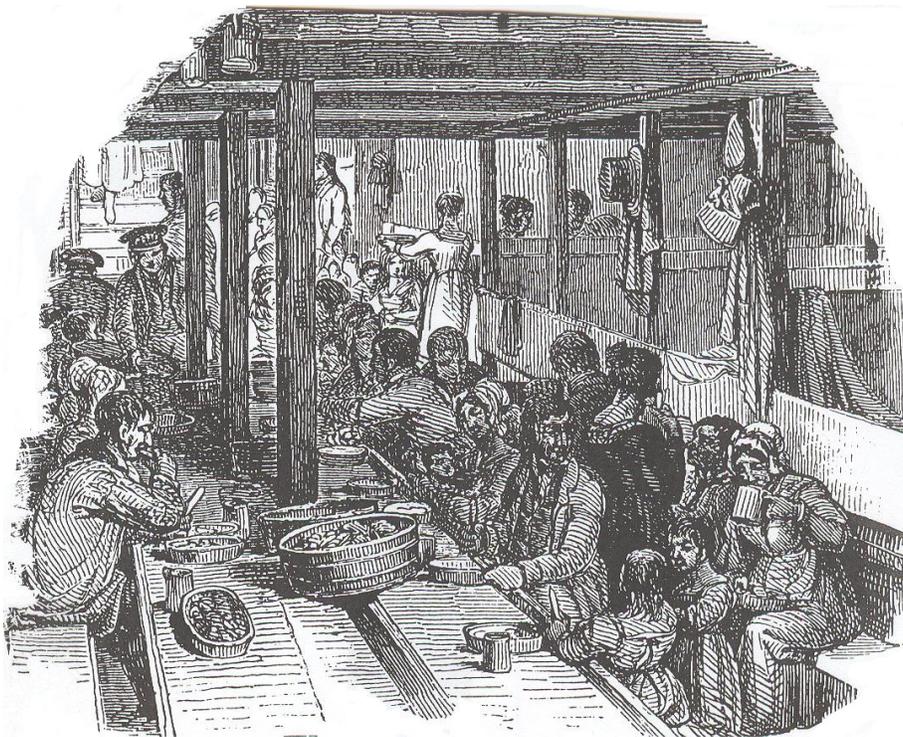
...a burden to their parents...a nuisance to their neighbours...(and) from absolute want of employment, becoming first pilfers, then poachers, and eventually thieves upon a larger scale, crowding our prisons with juvenile offenders, and adding, at a fearfully increasing rate, to the accumulating mass of crime and misery.<sup>27</sup>

In short, according to Sockett, the unemployed must be sent to some distant shore largely for the good of England.

In addition to clothing, cooking utensils, etc. all families who travelled in steerage regardless of where they originated or who was responsible for their support, were told to bring sufficient food to last the entire voyage because meals were not supplied by the shipping companies. To supplement their food provisions, however, families supported by the Petworth Committee received a daily food allowance. The amount set aside for one adult, or two children, was as follows:

- Sunday - beef 1lb, potatoes 1 3/4lb, rum and water 1/2 pint
- Monday - flour 1/2 lb, butter 1/4 lb, cheese 1/2 lb, raisins 1/4 lb.
- Tuesday - pork 1lb, potatoes 1 3/4lb, rum and water 1/2 pint
- Wednesday - flour 1/2 lb, butter 1/4 lb, cheese 1/2 lb, raisins 1/4 lb.
- Thursday - beef 1lb, potatoes 1 3/4lb, rum and water 1/2 pint
- Friday - flour 1/2 lb, butter 1/4 lb, cheese 1/2 lb, raisins 1/4 lb.
- Saturday - pork 1lb, potatoes 1 3/4lb, rum and water 1/2 pint

While these allowances, at first glance may seem meager, they were based on what the average farm worker and his family would normally have consumed on a daily basis at home as well as what was given to those who resided in a poorhouse which was also supported by the Petworth Committee<sup>28</sup> How did they manage their meals on board ship?



**Reproduced by permission from Haines, S. (1990).**

Brighton, England: Centre for Continuing Education, the University of Sussex.

...the emigrants were divided into messes...each mess drew its rations at ten o'clock in the morning and took turns so there was no undue delay and everyone got their fair share. Each mess may have put their rations of (salted) meat and potatoes together, cooked them en-masse in a communal pot, and doled them out in what seemed fair shares. On the other hand, each family may have cooked its own rations separately, putting their meat and potatoes to boil in marked nets or other containers in the communal boiler.<sup>29</sup>

Since most ships had well over 100 passengers, cooking took place on deck and probably went on throughout the day to accommodate the large number of required messes. The meals were consumed on a large table in a galley space located in the sleeping area below deck (*See illustration on previous page*).

With respect to sleeping, the quarters were extremely crowded. Upon arriving at the port of embarkation, whether part of the Petworth group or not, "A six foot square berth would be allocated to every three adults, or six children under the age of 14. Above the lower berths would be a second tier, so that the headroom between the two was only two to three feet."<sup>30</sup>

Beyond these eating and sleeping arrangements, what was life like on these long voyages? In addition to passengers, transatlantic ships were often old, had very limited sanitary facilities and, depending on their size, carried livestock (cows and calves, sheep, goats, pigs, and hens) needed to supply fresh meat largely for the cabin passengers. Greenhill and Giffard<sup>31</sup> summarized the overall living conditions that the passengers were forced to endure in the following way.

The smells were, of course, among the most notable features of life on board. The combination of animal and human excrements, foul water from the bottom of the ship below the pump wells which never came out, the remains of old cargoes, and the perpetually rotting wooden structure of the vessel herself must between them have produced a dreadful stench, unrelieved by any kind of ventilation system in the ship.

Sanitation comprised buckets screened around and sometimes fitted with seats. There were no special washing places and water was rationed. This was a great hardship to any with fastidious tastes. Often the water was taken on board from the river in which the vessel lay before the beginning of the voyage and before long smelt foul and tasted worse.

## **Cabin Passengers**

In addition to the Petworth emigrants who settled in Adelaide Township, there were others who also settled in Adelaide Township but were fairly wealthy. These passengers made the voyage in private cabins and, in one history of the township, were referred to as "gentlemen farmers"

because they “brought with them immigrants to do the actual work of opening up the country.”<sup>32</sup> The cabin passengers usually had no need to bring food because they had the option of paying for their meals when they booked passage and, depending on the ship, were often well fed.<sup>33</sup> The following daily food allowance is from a previously unpublished series of letters, portions of which were written during a trans-Atlantic voyage in 1858 by John Howard, who eventually settled on a farm near Mount Brydges. The letters, housed in the Western University Archives ( E42 ) were written for the benefit of his mother who remained in England. Throughout his voyage and even after landing in Upper Canada, he wrote an extremely detailed account of his daily activities.

On board ship breakfast was at 8 o'clock, lunch at 12, dinner at 4, and tea at 6. Although he could have dined with the other cabin passengers in a public saloon, he chose to eat most of his meals in his cabin because “the smell of the different eatables is too mighty for me.

At times breakfast consisted of “two cups of tea, and two plates of toast and ham, and some very good butter.” Other times for breakfast he would be served “chocolate, sausages, pickled salmon...cold fowl, etc...The fish is always salmon one day and turbot the next.” His lunch consisted of “soup and cold meats of every description” whereas for dinner he would have “fish soup, fresh meat of every sort and kind, pies, and stewed pigeons, ducks, geese, and turkeys.” For dessert there would be “First-rate confectionary, ices, creame, tarts, pies, and jellies of every sort.” To prevent these provisions from spoiling “All the fresh things are kept in ice...We have fish enough packed in ice to last us the journey.”

In view of his meals it might seem that he would also have been allotted considerable room and privacy, however, this was not so. Generally speaking, the cabins were quite small and usually housed a number of people who were not necessarily known to one another. In John Howard's case he had to share his cabin with “One Scotch clergyman, a Mr. John McLeane, who is going by appointment of the Bishop of Toronto, to a living near London, county of Middlesex... a Captain Salvadore who brought his wife and family with him together with his wife's two sisters, (and an) old Canadian Scotch farmer, who has a farm about 7 miles from Toronto.”

In addition to crowding, even within the private cabins, there was the further issue of having to associate for an extended period, with what were described by many as undesirable travelling companions elsewhere aboard ship.

I was not long in the ship when I saw what sort of company I was to have. Their language would have told me although I had been blind. There were 260 adults besides children and the ship's crew... A great majority of them were drunk when they came aboard and although it is against the government regulations they kept suckin away at the whisky the whole way...<sup>34</sup>

## Days at Seas

Storms were not uncommon. In fact most of the diaries and letters from this period contain vivid descriptions of the extreme weather conditions and seasickness encountered during the north Atlantic crossing. The following excerpt is from a diary by W. Gliddon who crossed the Atlantic around 1850.

Thursday, 12th. Weather dirty - about 4 p.m. orders were given to close-reef all sails as a storm was expected in half an hour and every sail was furled and the ship pumped out, ready for the worst. By this time the rain had begun to fall and the wind to rattle through the ropes like thunder. This lasted but a few minutes, and we were all in hopes it would pass over easily, but as it got dark the rain again began to fall, the wind to whistle and the sea to rise. By ten o'clock the storm was getting hot. Thunder is no more than a dog's bark compared with the tremendous roar of wind and sea. Ten o'clock all but three passengers went below, to turn in and try to sleep, and I being the hindmost left the scuttle (deck hatch) open, thinking the other three would follow. We had scarcely turned in when a sea struck her, making her reel most awfully. It came down the scuttle like a mill-stream, washing some of us nearly out of our beds. Two of our boxes broke from their lashings and rolled from side to side, strewing their contents as they went.

It was an anxious time; females shrieking, the water almost floating our things and the pails, etc., knocking about. It is impossible to convey an idea of such an awful sight. We had very little sleep this night.

I went to the top of the steps (next) morning, just to see the sea. I never witnessed such a sight before; it was one mass of foam, and rolling as high as our topmast, threatening every moment to swallow us up. About 2 p.m. another sea struck the ship, smashing in the cabin skylight and some of the bulwarks. This completed the disaster of last night.<sup>35</sup>

Although the cabin passengers often complained about the cramped sleeping arrangements, once they encountered inclement weather they quickly appreciated the benefit of these arrangements.

Persons who have never been to sea, fancy that the wooden crib for the bed is too narrow in dimensions; but when the ship begins to roll and toss amongst the billows, they soon find error in their supposition. Were the beds not of circumscribed width, they would be tumbled about from one side to the other, and very likely hove out altogether. Many have their beds widened in harbour, but are glad to reverse the matter once on the ocean.<sup>36</sup>

Loss of life resulting from stormy weather was also not uncommon. Between 1847 and 1851 at least 44 passenger vessels that left Great Britain were shipwrecked and lost at sea.<sup>37</sup> In terms of seasickness during stormy weather, Henry Christmas, in a book published in 1850, offered the following advice to future passengers on where to select a sleeping berth:

Choose then, if you can, a lower berth as far forward as possible, if you are a cabin passenger, or aft if a steerage one; because you will thus be nearest to the centre of the motion of the vessel, and so feel the least of the pitching. The only thing to be attended to in taking the lower berth is, if possible to avoid having a very sea-sick or awkward companion in the berth above you, or you may come in occasionally for a share of more benefits than you bargained for.<sup>38</sup>

Aside from these difficulties, another danger was possible exposure on board to illnesses of a contagious nature that could lead to serious complications or death.

... the great tragedy of the emigrant trade was contagious disease - ship-fever (typhus and typhoid), smallpox, cholera, and childhood diseases such as measles. These diseases were brought on board with the emigrants, they spread among undernourished people in the crowded and unsanitary conditions in the hold of many emigrant ships; and they took a further toll in the quarantine stations, hospitals, rooming houses, and tent cities where emigrants congregated on arrival.<sup>39</sup>

In summary, the best that can be said about the sea voyage is that crossing the ocean, and even travelling up the St. Lawrence, was an extremely perilous undertaking. In view of the hazards and uncomfortable travelling conditions, what is surprising is that a number of people (mostly cabin passengers) who made the voyage throughout the early 1800s, returned to England either on business or to visit family, and then sailed once again for North America.

### **Arrival in North America**

Since considerable effort was made by the Canada Land Company to encourage emigration through agents, advertising posters, books and pamphlets, by the 1840s nearly one million emigrants from the British Isles had set sail for North America. The total number of emigrants that arrived at the port cities of Quebec and Montreal (366,360) in Lower Canada en route to Upper Canada, however, was nearly equal to the number that sailed to the ports of New York and Boston (348,804) in the United States.<sup>40</sup>

We mention this point because following the Revolutionary War period (roughly the late 1780s through the early 1800s), in addition to the Holland Land Company in upper New York, many other

privately owned land companies had formed in the United States also with the hope of attracting settlers. These companies owned large tracts of land in areas that ranged from Connecticut through Pennsylvania, Ohio, Illinois, and even as far away as Georgia.<sup>41</sup> Hence, there was good reason to fear, on the part of the Canada Land Company, that many of those who travelled to the United States, although originally destined for Canada, might be persuaded by agents from the American companies to settle in the United States rather than continue on to Canada.

To counter this possibility Galt also stationed Canadian agents in both New York and Boston<sup>42</sup> and provided the following advice to those who entered North America en route to Canada via the United States.

With respect to emigrants in general, they will be surrounded on the wharfs, by land agents and other scheming persons, who, by false representations, will endeavour to persuade the stranger from his intended route, into the United States... Such persons should on no account, be listened to; and indeed all representations made by native Americans should be received by British emigrants with great suspicion...<sup>43</sup>

An even more explicit appeal to disregard any offers to settle in the United States appeared in a book by Thomas Rolph, a contemporary of Galt. The point of his message was to alert the prospective Canadian settler to the difficulties they would encounter if they did elect to remain in the United States.

With regard to choice between Canada and the United States, two circumstances should be well considered: First, to become a citizen of the United States, a person must serve an apprenticeship of five years, during which period he is considered as an alien; at least three years before he is deemed worthy of naturalization, he is compelled to appear before a publick court, abjure forever his allegiance to the land of this birth, and the King, and Constitution, which he has ever been accustomed to revere...(and only) after his purification from all monarchial principles, may he then possess land and houses...but he may rest assured that he will never obtain any (elected) office either of honour or emolument in the state.

In Upper Canada, (on the other hand) a native of Great Britain can hold property at once, becomes eligible to every office, and is indeed and in fact fully entitled to all the rights and privileges he enjoyed at home, and (is) happily exempt from all the burdens (in the United States) which must necessarily co-exist with (their) huge national debt.<sup>44</sup>

Because of the concern over the loss of emigrants who elected to sail to New York, and as an enticement to these emigrants to select Quebec (City) or Montreal, the Canada Land Company

offered to help those who wished to purchase property owned by Company to reach their final destination free of charge.

The Company's agents, on the arrival of emigrants at Quebec (City) or Montreal, will... convey them, free of expense, to York (Toronto), or the head of lake Ontario, which is in the vicinity of their choicest lands, provided the emigrants pay a first instalment in London (England), Quebec (City), or Montreal, of two shillings an acre, upon not less than one hundred acres.<sup>45</sup>

Parenthetically, this two-shilling price per acre was only a down payment. Because the land could be purchased on credit, the final cost for an acre was around 11 shillings. Since the Company had initially paid the Crown three shillings, two pence per acre, the shareholders' profit during the early days of recruitment, was indeed considerable.<sup>46</sup>

## **Arrival in Upper Canada**

### **Steerage Passengers**

While many passengers in steerage had sufficient funds to make at least a down payment on property, many others did not and therefore depended upon obtaining jobs such as farm worker or labourer. The latter frequently found work in opening roads into areas designated for settlement. Farm workers, on the other hand, were often in demand as hired hands to assist others who had already purchased land but needed help in clearing the land and/or in farming.

The hired man had a social status of his own. Whether he was an Irish immigrant or a son of a neighbouring landowner, he was treated by his employer as one of the family. "If a man is good enough to work for me, he is good enough to eat with me," was a common expression. The typical hired man did the hardest chores and was a reservoir of miscellaneous information, and so was always popular with the growing boys. He would sometimes help with the house-work, and (if single) could always be depended on to act as a beau for one of the girls. Probably more often than not he married one of them. Certainly he had an excellent opportunity of deciding which one would make the best wife for a farmer.<sup>47</sup>

In the case of the farm worker or labourer, as soon as he had accumulated sufficient funds, which could take four or five years, he could then purchase a lot from a corporate land owner, such as the Canada Land Company, or by auction from the Crown. If the lots were obtained from the Crown they usually measured 50 acres. The terms of purchase often granted a three year grace period before the new owner needed to make the "first of three instalments on a price of five shillings an acre and begin to pay interest."<sup>48</sup>

It was also possible to buy lots from individual land speculators even though regulations had been enacted as early as 1792 against the practice of individuals engaging in land speculation.<sup>49</sup> The reason for the regulations had to do with the original purpose for encouraging immigration and settlement. According to the Crown, when land was obtained it was incumbent upon the purchaser to clear a given portion, erect a home of a certain size, and reside on the property for a specified length of time. In other words, the owner was expected to take an active role in establishing a permanent settlement. Rather than achieving this ideal, however, it seems that “buying land to hold it for an increase in value was the accepted means of getting wealth...(and) as late as 1854 more than half the land of Simcoe County was owned by speculators.”<sup>50</sup> In London Township which consisted of 23,724 acres, 6,547 acres were held by absentee landlords, many of whom were “given appealing parcels of land, for services rendered, with the intention of (subsequently) reaping a tidy profit (by selling the land).”<sup>51</sup> Hence, contrary to a frequently conveyed impression of the early pioneers as individuals who left Great Britain with the aim of establishing permanent settlements in Upper Canada, many who emigrated were also capitalists with the goal of buying and selling land in the hope of making a quick profit.

As an illustration of the rapid turnover of property during the early 1800s, consider, for instance, Lot 29 on the first Concession in Westminster Township, which today is located north of Baseline Road and west of Wortley Road in London. According to information on file in the London Land Registry Office (see Service Ontario Middlesex County microfilm # E-33T-019) on February 16, 1819, John Davy was granted a patent (ownership) from the Crown on one hundred acres in the north half of this 200 acre lot. Approximately 11 months later (January 9, 1820) he sold the first portion to Thomas Duncombe (father of Charles Duncombe who played an active role in the Rebellion of 1837). On March 6, 1820, Davy sold a second portion to George Norton, and on August 9, 1820, he sold the final portion to Richard Dicy. George Norton in turn sold his share to Michael McLaughlin in July 1825 who then sold the same share to John Stephens in March 1826. In less than seven years portions of Davy’s 100 acre lot had changed hands five times.

Since much of the land bought from individual land speculators, as well as from the Crown and even from the Canada Land Company, was uncleared, to buy this land the potential purchaser first had to find the lots that were for sale. Because these lots were rarely located along cleared roads but instead were found mainly in heavily wooded areas, a common practice, according to a diary kept by John McDonald, was to hire a guide.

...in every township the ground is divided into concessions or grants, and each concession is again subdivided into a proportionate number of lots. A post is fixed in the ground to mark the limit or boundary of each concession...For this reason most of those who go to view their lots, take a guide with them and two or three go commonly together, which diminishes the expense to each individually because they have to pay their guide five or six

shilling every day that they are employed for this purpose, which commonly occupies three days when they go out on a journey of this nature.<sup>52</sup>

To select an appropriate lot for farming considerable attention was given to the trees because their nature indicated the quality of the soil and hence the crops most likely to succeed.

The best land is timbered with oak, ash, elm, beech, bass-wood, and sugar maple. A fair mixture of this species of tree is best, with here and there a large pine, and a few Canadian balsams scattered among the hard-wood. Too great a proportion of beech indicates sand or light loam: a preponderance of rock-elm is a sign of gravel or limestone rock near the surface.<sup>53</sup>

Adding to this advice was the following recommendation in the 1850 book by Henry Christmas:

When you are upon it, see that it is chiefly covered with hardwood, such as beech and maple, and beware of pine, unless you want it for a saw-mill, otherwise pine land is always very severe land to clear, the stumps an interminable time in rotting out, desperately hard to grub up, and the land sometimes miserably poor when you have done all.<sup>54</sup>

Once the decision was made and the land purchased, the first task was to erect some form of shelter. Often the first shelter was little more than a temporary hut open at one side to allow heat from a nearby outside fire to warm the interior. While residing in this enclosure, the settler, with helpers, would begin to clear the land and erect a log cabin to house the remaining members of the family, who in the meantime, often lived elsewhere in a previously established settlement. The following account is from a book by Edward Allan Talbot whose father, Richard Talbot, settled on land north of London in 1818.

In the latter part of October my father removed his family from Port Talbot to Westminster, where he procured lodgings for them until a house was erected on his own lands...On the 26th of October, my brother and I, with six men carrying provisions and felling-axes, took our departure from Westminster, and, having hired a guide, proceeded into London, to fix upon the most desirable lot, the erection of a house...After spending the greater part of the day in approving and disapproving of particular lots, we unanimously determined on making the second lot, in the sixth concession, the future asylum of our exiled family. When we had agreed on this point, our next consideration was, to procure shelter for the night; for we were upwards of nine miles from the abodes of civilized beings, and in the midst of desolate wilds...

We continued encamped in the woods from the 26th of October, until the 1st of December. During this period, we laid the foundation of a house, forty-six feet long, and twenty-one feet wide; one half of which we finished first, for the accommodation of the family, who (we) removed into it on the 2nd of December...<sup>55</sup>

Next, the remaining trees were felled, gathered, and burned often with the help of a logging bee. Samuel Strickland, writing about his experiences in the late 1840s, provided one of the earliest descriptions of a logging bee.

As soon as the ground was cool enough, I made a logging Bee, at which I had five yokes of oxen and twenty men, four men to each team. The teamster selects a good place to commence a heap (of logs), generally against some large log which the cattle would be unable to move. They draw all the logs within a reasonable distance in front of the large log. The men with hand-spikes roll them, one upon the top of the others, until the heap is seven or eight feet high, and ten or twelve broad. All the chips, sticks, and rubbish are then picked up and thrown on the top of the heap. A team and four good men should log and pick an acre a day...On a dark night, a hundred or two of these large heaps all on fire at once have a very fine effect, and shed a broad glare of light for a considerable distance. In the month of July in the new settlements, the whole country at night appears lit up by these fires.<sup>56</sup>

The logging bees in Middlesex County were often occasions for friendly, competitive social gatherings.

Enough men gathered to form several gangs, each having a yoke of oxen and a driver. The field was mapped out in rectangular areas each wide enough to permit the gathering of the logs conveniently into heaps, and extending in length from side to side of the field. Then began the race, the result depending largely on the team and driver, as was the activity and expertness of the gang. Some prominent man was often appointed manager and umpire for the whole field. The oxen seemed to understand Gaelic, sometimes not the very choicest, especially when drivers got angry or excited. In this way the timber was all gathered into large heaps, which were subsequently burned.<sup>57</sup>

After burning the excess timber, a fence would be erected, other structures such a barn would be built, and with the assistance of oxen the tree stumps removed and the field would be prepared for planting. All of this required additional funds well beyond what was initially needed to buy the property.

Contrary to an impression rather prevalent among later generations, a considerable amount of money or credit was necessary for getting a start in the backwoods. It was estimated that

the man who had 100 pounds currency, in addition to what he paid for his land, had a bare minimum. It would take 20 pounds to buy a pair of oxen, a yoke, a longing-chain, and a harrow, 8 pounds for a cow and couple of pigs, 22 pounds for a year's provisions, and 50 pounds for erecting buildings and for hiring labour to assist in chopping and logging. Those who lacked money when they arrived in the new settlements had to acquire it by one means or another before they could expect to have a farm of their own.<sup>58</sup>

### **Cabin Passengers**

Unlike steerage passengers, cabin passengers usually had sufficient funds to buy land that had already been cleared and farmed. Returning to the letters by John Howard, after landing in Toronto, "the first thing we did was to send Aunt and the children (who travelled with him from England) and all the luggage that was wanted to a hotel called The Rossin House. It is the best hotel in Toronto." They were to remain in the hotel until he and his uncle, who also travelled from England, located a suitable farm on which to settle. Using Toronto as a base from which to examine the surrounding area, they resided in a boarding house to which they returned most evenings.

To begin their search, "we called at the Canada (Land) Company's house, and had papers and particulars of lands they have for sale. On Monday (July 19) we shall start at 1/2 past 7 o'clock to Niagara, look at the falls, and a farm in the neighbourhood, thence to Buffalo, and a long route westward..." Their journey finally ended on August 18 with the purchase of a farm near Mount Brydges. During their month long stay in Toronto, according to his letters, they travelled over 1000 miles sometimes by boat, but more often by rail and stage accompanied by several Canada Land Company agents. In total they visited around 10 properties.

Their reasons for rejecting certain properties provide an interesting glimpse into, not only the state of the farms that were for sale at the time, but also some of the factors that led them not to purchase a given piece of land.

#### Strathroy

We have looked at two farms today. Each of them is two hundred acres. One has a farm house, and no barn. The other had a barn, but no farm house. The worst of it is, the two together have not water enough on them for one (farm). They each have a fair well and sufficient (water) for domestic use, but then there is none for twenty or thirty head of cattle. So these will not do.

#### Barrie

The next day we went to Mr \_\_\_\_\_'s farm. He seems a nice sort of man. He has been in the country 10 years and on the same farm, yet it looks very dreary and desolate. I believe

owing to so much of the timber being heavy pine, he didn't get the stumps out...These being in the ground, the cleared land looks worse, that is more dreary and desolate than the surrounding forest...(also) the neighbourhood is peopled with ignorant and uneducated individuals

#### Chatham

We saw a beautiful farm here and cheap. It had a good frame house, and also good barns, and all necessary out buildings, but ague (an illness characterized by high fever and chills) prevails and so it is a very unhealthy neighbourhood.

Also worth mentioning are some of the difficulties they encountered during their month long journey before they arrived at the farm they eventually purchased near Mount Brydges.

On reaching Hamilton (at half past three Sunday morning) we found that the train did not go farther (that night), and there was no other till Monday morning. I procured a buggy and team, that is a pair of horses, and off we started for Toronto. By and bye we came to a place by the lake shore where the lake had washed away the road, so we had to go seventeen miles out of our way in consequence. This makes our journey 62 miles instead of 45, and (this) was not the only mishap, for when about 20 or 30 miles from Toronto, one of our horses dropped down and died in about 2 or 3 minutes. Overheated, I suppose, as the owner was driving and taking care of the animals. We now got another conveyance and went on a few miles, when the tire of one wheel came off, then we had to get a wagon and a horse who soon threw a shoe...(we finally) got into Toronto in the afternoon instead of the morning, and very tired we were.

Tuesday, August 10<sup>th</sup>. Started off this morning (from Toronto) in a railway car to Mount Brydges 150 miles away... I was suffering very severely from Cholera, and was nearly drawn double with pain. The attack came on about 10 o'clock. Vomiting and diarrhea set in so violently, I really thought the two would soon make a speedy end of me. I travelled like this 120 miles... when we stopped at a station in London. I went to the refreshment room and asked for brandy. They handed me one bottle, I filled a glass nearly full and drank it... When I got to Mount Brydges I found that (travelling) the next 25 miles was in a cart...I had a drop more brandy, and finally arrived...at the house of a Wm. Bentley, of whom we bought the farm.

Illnesses of a fairly serious nature were not uncommon among those who travelled by rail in the mid-1800s since, in the last passage quoted above, John Howard mentioned that "all the railway carriages out here have accommodations for invalids." Although many pioneers lived very long

lives, some even into their 80s and 90s, Jones<sup>59</sup> also commented on the prevalence of illness among pioneer families.

Present-day romanticists, knowing that the first settlers had plain food and plenty of outdoor exercise, often think that they escaped sickness. This is a misconception ...Malaria was nearly universal...Individuals died of “decline,” of “inflammation of the bowels,” of diphtheria, and scarlet fever, and medical science of the time was helpless. Sometimes an epidemic, like the cholera of 1832, would strike down a large part of a community.

In addition to difficulties of this nature, John Howard also recounted a number of other trying experiences after he purchased the farm on August 12, 1858.

November 17, 1858

...while in the woods a tremendous hurricane or storm passed over. The lightening flashed and the thunder pealed. Two trees were blown down quite near to us. Bobby (his nephew) was with me, and wanted to go home. The falling trees frightened him, but the storm drove so, we could not (go home). In Canada, when it does rain, (the rain) comes down in bucketfulls, not as a storm of decent rain comes down in England. Out here it seems to rain, as though none had fallen since the (Biblical) flood, and it was now going to make up for the past.

November 18, 1858

(On the way to market) we passed along some fearfully bad roads with mud holes, I'm sure, more than 3 feet deep. The horses could not pull the wagon out without help.

December 8, 1858

Sharp frost. Thermometer 7 degrees (Fahrenheit) below freezing in the bedroom. Friday, ditto, very cold. Saturday, 9 degrees below freezing in the bedroom.

January 19, 1859

...20 degrees below freezing in the house, milk, meat, bread, everything that could freeze was frozen.

Comments concerning the extreme cold in the settler's dwellings often appeared in many of the letters, diaries, and books written by the pioneers.

Even in houses of improved type and construction the cold was often very intense. Mrs. Traill describes how cold it was in her home during the winter of 1833: “The mercury was down to twenty-five degrees in the house. The sensation of cold early in the morning was very painful, producing an involuntary shuddering, and an almost convulsive feeling in the chest. Our breaths were congealed in hoar-frost on the sheets and blankets...” John Macaulay wrote to his mother in November 1837: “We live in a very airy house. The wind almost blows through it”...Owing to the poor means of heating the homes, the cold was felt in town houses almost as much (as in the rural cabins)...water commonly froze in one’s bedroom during the night.<sup>60</sup>

### **Post-Arrival Adjustment**

In view of the many hardships that the early immigrants to Middlesex County endured, was emigration truly worthwhile and did the immigrants become permanent residents? What happened, for example, to John Howard? By his own admission John Howard was a “gentleman farmer.” While in his letters he never mentioned using hired hands to perform the farm work, he did confess to knowing nothing about ploughing or chopping wood prior to arriving in Canada.

Last June I had never stood between the handles of a plough, but now I have been obliged not only to learn to plough but to break in a span of horses that had never ploughed before. It gave me, a novice in both arts (ploughing and horse breaking), a great deal of trouble and sorely tried my patience...Then again the chopping—Englishmen at home have no idea what an American axe can do. I found them very awkward customers to handle at first, but I have been much more fortunate than many are. I have not cut my foot with one, though twice the axe has glanced and cut off, or rather shaved off, a piece of my boot.

Despite these drawbacks and the experiences referred to above, he seemed to have enjoyed his life on the farm since his letters are full of very positive comments dealing with the daily chores of ploughing, chopping, and tending to the needs of his livestock. He also travelled frequently and hunted small game, though largely for sport.

Canada is a very different country to Old England...in some parts the scenery is magnificent, and altogether beyond my powers of description, for instance the river St. Lawrence, the Lake of a Thousand Islands, the falls of and neighbourhood of Niagara, and coasts round Lake Simcoe, Erie, Huron, and Ontario. I have visited and sailed on all these lakes and shot wild ducks on Huron and Erie.

Howard even attended the occasional party.

There was a grand party at Strathroy, the last night of the year. The dancing was kept up all night, we danced until past 5 o'clock and then broke up. Got home about six o'clock, and slept till ten...

Since many further accounts in his letters are similar to these, on the whole it would appear that emigration from England for John Howard was indeed worthwhile. Nevertheless, like some of the other gentleman farmers who came to Middlesex County and subsequently returned home<sup>61</sup> he only remained on the farm for a short period and eventually sailed back to England. Although his motives are unknown, he later sailed once again for North America but never returned to Mount Brydges and instead moved to Texas.

And what about the emigrants who travelled from England in steerage? The overall impression conveyed in a series of letters written between 1832 and 1838 by those who came to Adelaide Township with the help and financial support of the Petworth Committee, was that emigration was a truly valuable undertaking. Excerpts from a collection assembled by Cameron, Hanes, and Maude<sup>62</sup> are reprinted below. The first six were destined for friends and/or relatives back home while the final one is from a letter by Frederick Hasted that appeared on February 7, 1834 in the *Brighton Herald* newspaper. Unlike the others, Hasted's letter was directed to the general population of Sussex in order to clarify the purpose of the Committee's work and to the Petworth Committee to encourage its members to continue their good work.

From William Phillips

Dear Father and Mother, I hope you will come...next summer. I would not advise you to come here, if I did not know it would be to your advantage, even if you spend your last shilling to get here. And bring uncle Carpenter with you, and (neither) he, nor you will ever repent coming here for I can get you both a farm, if you want one...

From William Cooper

Dear Father and Mother, brothers and sisters...I have got 100 acres of land, at 2 dollars per acre, one fourth to be paid at the end of 3 years and the rest in 3 years more...I should like for all my brothers to come here, for here is plenty of work, and no doubt but we shall do very well after next harvest.

From Mary Holden

Dear Friends... Father sends his kind love to all of you, and hopes that you will make up your minds, and take a good resolution to come here, for here is a good prospect of doing well and getting a good living, Father says he would not come back to England again for no respects.

From Stephen Goatcher

Dear Wife... There are about 1500 souls come to this township this year. It is accounted as good land as any in Canada. I want to know how you are getting on. I am fearful the times are bad for farming in England. I do not have overseers call on me for poor taxes (the taxes that were levied on property owners in England in 1834 to support the poor) as you have; that is the beauty of this country.

From Ann Mann

Dear Sons and Friends... I wish you and your little children was here; they would be better off here than you are in old England. Here is a good living to be got with working ... (and) they don't work harder here then you do (in England)... What would have become of my children if they had been in England and I had been put into some poorhouse; but now if I go out at the door I do see great comfort; I can say I am as happy and as comfortable as ever I was in all my life... Let my letter be copied off and be stuck up at the Onslows Arms (an inn by the Way and Arun canal at Loxwood) to let everyone see that I lives in Adelaide; don't leave no one thing out that I say.

From Charles Rapley

Dear Father, and Mother, Brothers, and Sisters, Friends, and Relations all... If my brother Thomas wishes to do himself any good, I should advise him by all means to come here, he would be sure to do well here, either as a brickmaker, a farmer's labourer, or, if he likes, I will give him the choice either of going in partnership with me on my farm, or let him have half the land... whether he is married or single makes no difference, for children are not a burden here; if people cannot keep them themselves, there are plenty of the old settlers, glad to keep them, if you will let them have them for a certain term of years, according to their age.

From Frederick Hasted

I now come to say I cannot add much to the good accounts you have already received of this country, but confirm their correctness, especially the description of climate and guide given out with the map (provided by the Canada Land Company)...Some people at home were ignorant enough to say that those sent out (of England) by the Earl of Egremont (the wealthy land owner responsible for the funds to support the Petworth Committee's undertaking) were going out like convicts; but let those people (ask), which is most like a convict, - a man chained, as it were, to his parish because he cannot get work (and) is obliged to take what they will give him (and) be looked upon as a useless being, an evil, yea, a pest to society...or a man that has all Canada before him, can obtain what land he pleases to employ his family or himself, get good wages, pay his way, and be respected as a useful member of society; this is a true picture and I hope they (the Petworth Committee) will send more (people)...it is the best thing you can do for them..

Considered together these letters convey a reasonable sense of why, for the poor who left England, emigration in steerage to Upper Canada in the early 1800s was a very worthwhile endeavour. In recounting the history of Adelaide Township, Talman<sup>63</sup> observed that the majority of settlers who arrived as Petworth emigrants stayed and were instrumental in helping to develop the township. The same can be said of other locations in Middlesex County and the surrounding area where the Petworth emigrants settled such as Plympton-Wyoming, Woodstock, Waterloo, Galt, and Guelph, to name a few.<sup>64</sup> Thus, even though the Petworth Committee was formed with the aim of helping the wealthy to reduce their tax burden and England to reduce its crime rate, the Committee did in fact benefit not only the emigrants but also many communities throughout Southwestern Ontario where the emigrants settled.

## Part II – The Education of Children

The initial legislation that led to the establishment of elementary schools throughout Upper Canada was the Elementary or Common School Act of 1816. Prior to 1816 no formal provisions were made for the education of children.

A few settlers clubbed together, raised money enough to buy sufficient nails and a few panes of glass; then by means of “bees” the building was erected. The teacher boarded round, staying a week or two with each family.<sup>65</sup>

According to the Act, “The inhabitants of (each) town, township, village, or place concerned (were authorized) to meet in public assembly and so soon as they had erected a suitable schoolhouse and

were able to show that twenty children were likely to attend the same, they were to appoint three fit and discreet persons to act as trustees to appoint a teacher.”<sup>66</sup> In reality, though, the teachers “were essentially school keepers rather than school teachers...(and their success)..depended mainly upon their qualifications as disciplinarians.”<sup>67</sup>

In 1842 the Legislative Council in Upper Canada attempted to centralize and reform the school system. While it is reasonable to assume that the attempt at reform was based on the educational needs of the children, this was not the case. Instead, the rationale behind the 1842 movement was based more on the political needs of the time. “The (MacKenzie) Rebellion of 1837 was still fresh in their minds, and the need for an efficient institution to socialize and promote the proper politicization of the populace was strong.”<sup>68</sup>

Adding to this fear of a further rebellion was a growing concern over the proliferation of American textbooks in the classroom. In an 1839 report on the conditions of schooling in Upper Canada, Lord Durham had the following to say about this matter.

Great care should be taken in the selection of textbooks. Your committee regrets to find that additions published in the U.S. are much used throughout the Province, tintured, as they are with principles which, however, fit for dissemination under the form of Government which exists there, cannot be inculcated here without evil results.<sup>69</sup>

With these concerns in mind in 1844 the Reverend Egerton Ryerson was appointed Assistant Superintendent of Education and was asked to recommend a satisfactory elementary system for Upper Canada. To standardize instruction and to ensure that any attempt to Americanize the curriculum would be curtailed, “the first concrete steps were taken toward the selection and authorization of specific texts for use in the schools.”<sup>70</sup> When commenting on the inappropriate use of American texts, Ryerson remarked that

It is not because they are foreign books...although it is patriotic to use our own (texts) in preference to foreign publications; but because they are, with very few exceptions, anti-British in every sense of the word...I believe such books are one element of powerful influence against the established government of our country. From facts which have come to my knowledge, I believe it will be found, on inquiry, that in precisely those parts of Upper Canada where the United States books had been used most extensively, there the spirit of the (Mackenzie) insurrection in 1837 and 1838 was prevalent.<sup>71</sup>

To avoid any further insurrections in Upper Canada it was considered important to generate a strong sense of Canadian nationalism and identity among the young and this could best be achieved

only through an effective, centralized school system. In 1846 the first steps were undertaken to acquire a series of textbooks that would be deemed appropriate for use across a British oriented Canadian school curriculum. At the time no such series were being printed in Canada, and so with Ryerson's recommendation, the Board of Education for Upper Canada examined and accepted a series published for the Irish Board of Education in Dublin. Several publishing firms in Toronto immediately began to produce sufficient copies of the first three readers in the Irish series for use throughout the province. The entire series consisted of more than 50 publications that contained material appropriate for elementary school through high school and included such advanced topics as physical geography and geology, Jewish history, political economy, hydrostatics, optics, electricity, and chemistry along with Scripture deemed appropriate for both Catholics and Protestants.<sup>72</sup> By 1866, of the more than 4,000 common schools in the province, only 54 reported that they were not using this material.<sup>73</sup>

Ryerson also spent a year visiting school systems in more than 20 European countries. The report he prepared, which gave rise to the School Law Act of 1846, contained the following provisions:

that property generally should be taxed for the support of the elementary schools; that school attendance should be compulsory; that the schools should be systematically inspected; (and) that the teachers should receive professional training.<sup>74</sup>

Among his many accomplishments beyond the use of the Irish textbook series was legislation derived from the School Law Act that led to the establishment of a normal school system throughout the province with authority to grant teaching certificates. No longer would school districts be forced to rely upon itinerant and often unskilled instructors with limited knowledge of the curriculum and whose teaching skills depended largely on the use of disciplinary techniques. The first normal school, located in Toronto, opened in November 1847, the second was constructed in Ottawa in 1875, followed by the London Normal School which opened in 1900.<sup>75</sup> It was only with the emergence of these normal schools that those with proper training would now be authorized to teach in the provincial school system.

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# A Chronological Account of My Role in the 2001 Saga of the Talbot Tot

Dan Brock

## The Setting

Today the complex known as Budweiser Gardens proudly sits on what in the 1980s became known as the Talbot Block. Prior to this time, the block was comprised of nineteenth-century structures, many dating back to within a few years after the Great Fire of 1845.



Beginning in 1980 properties were secretly being bought up within this block bounded by Dundas, Ridout, King and Talbot streets. In 1984, it was revealed that Cambridge Shopping Centres, Ltd. of Toronto had been behind the purchasing of these properties and planned a \$250-million development on what became known as the Talbot Block. It was later learned that it wanted all the existing buildings removed. By 1986, however, there was a groundswell of opposition to the destruction of the streetscape along the west side of Talbot Street, between King and Dundas. On Saturday, August 27, 1988, a 1,500 strong human chain was formed from the southwest corner of

Talbot and Dundas streets to City Hall, four blocks away, to save the streetscape. After years of wrangling, City Hall gave in to the developers, on September 16, 1991, and agreed to the demolition of the Talbot Streetscape, with the exception of the façade of the Talbot Inn on the northeast corner of the Block. In the end, the mall/hotel complex failed to materialize and the City took over the property.<sup>1</sup>

In March 2001, work began on the \$42-million London Entertainment and Sports Complex which would be named the John Labatt Centre and later the Budweiser Gardens, but, before this, controversy within the Talbot Block would rear its head once more.

### **Wide-Eyed Innocence**

It was on the evening of the Tuesday, March 27, 2001, while at the monthly executive meeting of The London & Middlesex Historical Society at the Middlesex County Administration Building (aka The Old Court House), that I first learned that earlier that day the remains of a child were discovered while excavation was being undertaken on the Talbot Block. As I was parked along the north side of King Street, east of Ridout, I noticed a police cruiser and two female police officers chatting at the gated entrance near the southwest corner of the Block. I was later to learn that Detectives Ron Hettinga and Andy Gradkowski and Detective Constable Rob Brookfield from the Major Crime Section of the London Police, were involved in the investigation following the discovery of the remains in a “almost metre-long, six [eight]-sided coffin that was narrow at the head, wider about one-third of the way down and narrow at the feet”.

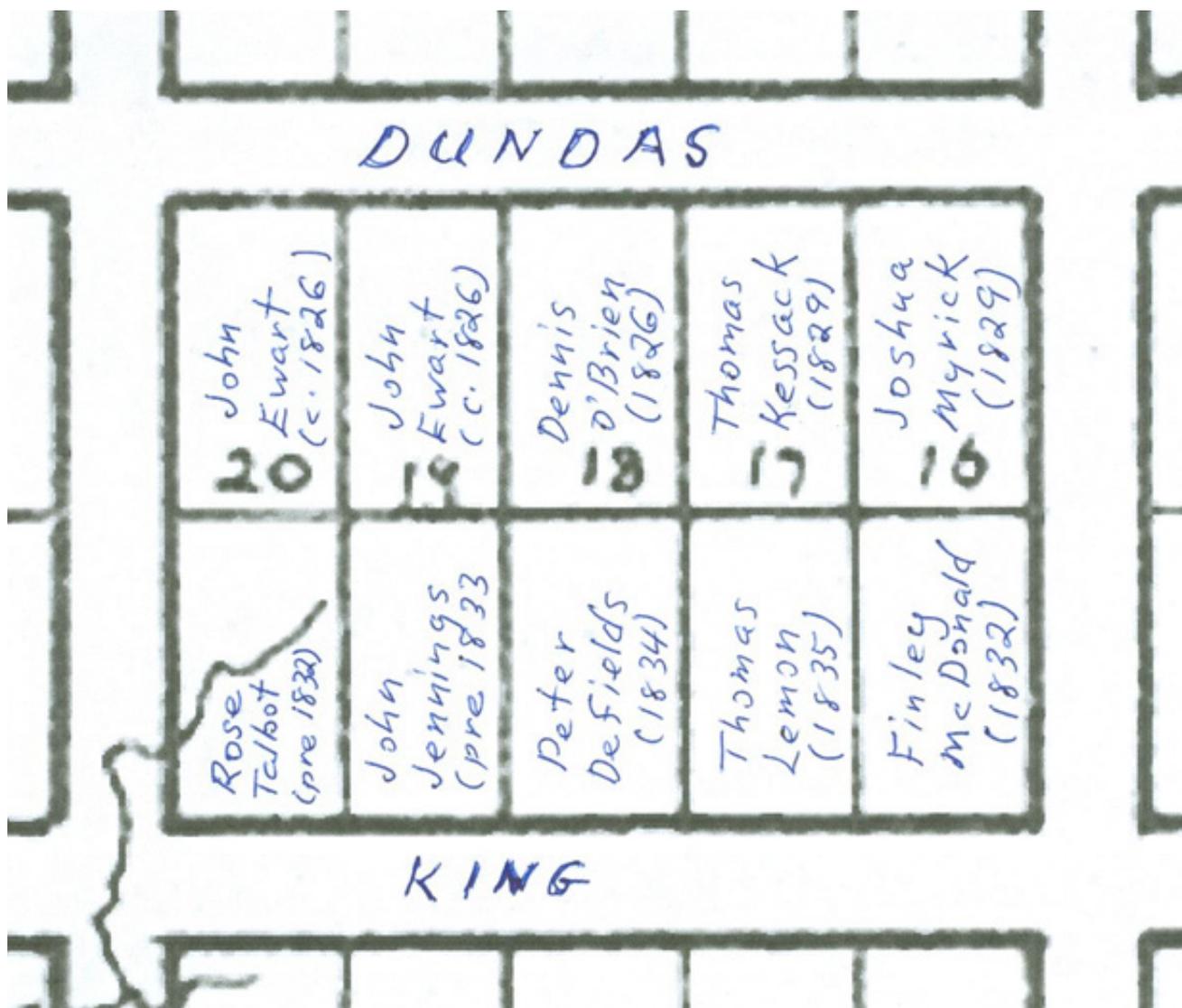
On arriving back home, I returned the telephone call of John Minor of *The London Free Press*. He mentioned today’s discovery and wanted to know whether the block had ever been used as a cemetery. I was able to say definitely not. While there was news on the find at 11:00 p.m., I arrived downstairs too late to watch this on the local television channel.<sup>2</sup>



**The Talbot Block**  
**as superimposed on a portion of Mahlon Burwell's 1826 plan of the town plot of London**

Wednesday's *Free Press* carried an article on the previous day's discovery. I was quoted from my conversation with John Minor the previous night and was mentioned on at least one of the local radio stations. Ian Gillespie of the *Free Press* called me at Catholic Central High School (CCH), where I was a teacher, and requested material on London and the Talbot Block prior to the Great Fire of April 13, 1845 which had destroyed most of the structures still standing there after the Great Dundas Street Fire of October 8, 1844. Following classes, I returned home, picked up a few books and my files based on the land records and the Upper Canada Land Petitions for the original town plot of London and met with Ian at the Free Press Building then on the south side of York Street west of Colborne. Ian informed me that the remains had been found on the west half of lot 18 on the north side of King Street. The merchant Dennis O'Brien, had purchased this property from Peter DeFields in 1837 and, in turn, had sold it to his sister-in-law Nancy Ladd in 1842. Ian's second call that evening revealed that, according to Robert G. "Bob" Mayer,<sup>3</sup> whose archaeological company, Mayer Heritage Consultants Inc. (MHCI), had discovered the fragile eight-sided wooden coffin and a child's remains some two feet below the surface, the location

was actually the west half of lot 17, on the north side of King Street. Further research on my part revealed that Thomas Lemon was living on the property during the 1830s and that Lemon was a cabinet maker. What better person to build a coffin for his dead child, assuming he was married and had a child who died while residing on this lot? I phoned Dr. Michael Spence, a local police forensic anthropologist, who like Bob Mayer was a good acquaintance of mine and had done the initial forensic evaluation on the child's remains.<sup>4</sup> A message was left on his answering machine regarding the possibility that Thomas Lemon might have constructed the coffin for his own child.



**Original owners of the lots of the Talbot Block and the year located**

After I had left the house that morning, Sandy Mowett of CBC Radio in Toronto, had called in connection with my comments in today's *Free Press*. I returned his call in the late afternoon, but he had already left for the day. The finding of a child's skeleton in a coffin on the site of the proposed London Entertainment and Sports Complex was generating interest beyond the Forest City!<sup>5</sup>

Thursday morning's paper carried three items relating to the discovery of the child's remains. The front page article by Simone Joseph and Randy Richmond noted that, if a body appeared to have been buried intentionally in an irregular burial site, as this certainly was, the Cemetery Act of Ontario required at least a 30-day wait before its removal. The city had hoped to get quick provincial approval to remove the child's remains and Vic Cote, the planning and development commissioner, declared: "We're going to do everything in our power to move this along."<sup>6</sup> I should have taken serious note of this, as events were quickly to prove, but I did not.

Simone Joseph's article related to Michael Spence's preliminary findings on the remains and Ian Gillespie's article was a whimsical and speculative piece on the tot.<sup>7</sup>

After returning home from school that afternoon, I checked my copy of the Ontario Genealogical Society Directory, found a Catherine Lemon living in St. Thomas and telephoned her. She knew about Thomas Lemon of St. Thomas, said she was a descendant of his, but did not know that he had once lived in London. Catherine also told me that Thomas had been in partnership with a "Mr. Collins" in the cabinet making business in St. Thomas and that he was buried in that city.

Just after supper, Michael Spence returned my telephone call of last night. He said that the child's coffin had been waterlogged, which is why it was preserved as well as it was. He also stated that someone at the Robarts Research Institute had volunteered to do the DNA testing on the body free of charge. This, I later learned was Dr. Robert Hegele, a world-renowned geneticist who worked with a team of first-rate lab technicians and who, with other top anthropologists, including Spence at the University of Western Ontario (UWO), comprised the Bio-archeology Research Facility.<sup>8</sup> Later that evening, Jane Hughes, an acquaintance of mine living in St. Thomas, sent me two emails pertaining to her research on Thomas Lemon.<sup>9</sup>

The front page headline of the paper for Friday, March 30th, noted that I was inclined to believe that Thomas Lemon may have been the child's father, that Mayor Anne Marie DeCicco favoured "a quiet service before burial in a city cemetery" rather than making "a big media spectacle out of this" and that the City had "applied for leave from the province yesterday to remove the remains."<sup>10</sup>

On Friday afternoon, I had a television interview in the school's conference room with two male individuals from The New PL (now CTV London). Fortunately, I had the materials with me to illustrate the location of the child's remains and coffin within the Talbot Block. That morning, I had done telephone interviews with Erica Ridder of CBC Radio in Toronto and Brian Allen of the radio station in Wingham. The story was beginning to receive provincial, if not national, attention.

Meanwhile, I had received a telephone call from Bob Mayer that morning saying that Vic Cote, wanted to see him and me that day. We arranged to meet with Cote at 4:00 p.m.<sup>11</sup>

I was looking forward to this meeting with great anticipation, as I believed that the City was interested in bringing together experts in their fields to possibly determine the identity of the child through DNA testing and the date of burial through dendrochronology (tree-ring dating) of the wood used in the coffin. How naïve of me!

### **Coming Face to Face with Reality**

It was about 3:50 p.m. on Friday, March 31<sup>st</sup>, when I left CCH to go to the seventh floor of City Hall for the meeting with Vic Cote and Bob Mayer. When I arrived, I was not surprised to see Michael Spence, but was astounded to see six other individuals, including Clive Matthews who, like Cote, was a municipal officer in charge of the London Entertainment and Sports Complex construction, representatives of the general construction company Ellis-Don and a retired psychologist, Dr. J. Trevor Hawkins, whom I later learned was serving with Mayer Heritage Consultants Inc. (MHCI) as a built-heritage researcher and media-relations officer!<sup>12</sup> The meeting started as soon as I sat down and was mainly a monologue by Cote about how bad the media was, especially the *Free Press* and Randy Richmond in particular. The psychologist went on about how our words to the media are misinterpreted, how people then misinterpret those words and then threw out the red herring that the child could have been buried there because it was illegitimate and that digging into its identity would bring shame and embarrassment to living members of that family! Basically, Cote did not want anyone speaking with the media. “There are 101 ways of saying ‘No comment’”, he said.

When he asked if we were all in agreement, I was the only one who dissented, although I suspected Michael Spence, in his heart, agreed with my position. Cote’s reply was, “We don’t have an agreement. The meeting’s over.” And that was that!

I left fully aware that the entire meeting was intended to get me on side with Cote and the developers. I was angry as I do not appreciate intimidation, and this, in my opinion, had been the whole purpose of the meeting. Only one other person left when I did. It would appear that the meeting continued to determine the course of action in light of the fact that I had not acquiesced to Cote’s wishes.

At 6:00 p.m., my wife and I watched the local news and saw the clip of the interview held at CCH and a view of Thomas Lemon’s gravestone in St. Thomas. Randy Richmond had telephoned me at CCH. I had tried unsuccessfully to get in touch with him a couple of times before leaving the school. He contacted me this evening and I filled him in on what new findings I had learned and what had transpired at City Hall on the promise that it was “off the record” for the present.<sup>13</sup>

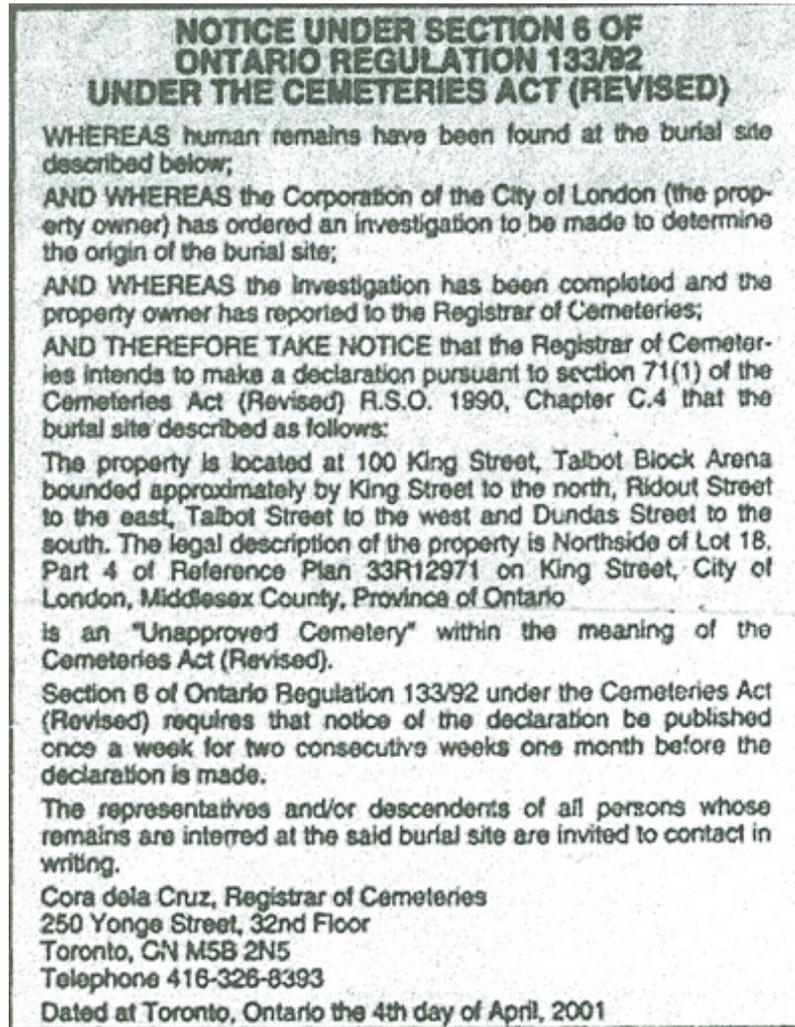
By this time, I had also been approached by another acquaintance, Geoff Anderson of London, who was to provide me with valuable information on the Lemon and Defields/DeFields families over the next several weeks.<sup>14</sup>

### **Interest in the Find on the Talbot Block Expands and Deepens**

The article on the front page of the Saturday, March 31<sup>st</sup> issue revolved around the Lemon family in St. Thomas and their connection with Thomas Lemon. There was even a photograph of John Lemon, Catherine's son, on one knee beside the gravestone of Thomas Lemon, their ancestor. What would have put Vic Cote into orbit, I suspect, was that the Lemons indicated they would be willing to take a DNA test to determine whether the remains were that of a Lemon child. I cannot say I am displeased with this turn of events after Cote's attempt to intimidate me the afternoon before.<sup>15</sup>

Over the next couple of days, I continued to be in telephone communication with Randy Richmond. At a grandson's hockey game on the evening of Tuesday, April 3<sup>rd</sup>, I chatted with Chip Martin, another columnist for the *Free Press* and good acquaintance. He related that the talk among the *Free Press* staff was of my meeting with Vic Cote and the presence of a psychologist. It was also Chip who related to me that some wag suggested the new complex on the Talbot Block be called the Lemon Centre.<sup>16</sup> Not everyone was pleased with its location. Many believed the Western Fair Grounds was preferable owing to parking and what good such a complex could do for East London.

The article in the issue of Wednesday, April 4<sup>th</sup>, dealt with the fact that, the day before, Cora dela Cruz, the Registrar of Cemeteries for the Province, had declared the burial site an "Unapproved Cemetery" and imposed a 30-day delay on the removal of the remains in order that possible relatives might claim them. I was quoted as saying: "This makes a lot of sense. There has been so much publicity, possibly somebody could claim the remains." Vic Cote, who understandably was not pleased with this holdup, stated: "This is a bit of a surprise but that's the decision so we'll live with it ... I can't tell you what it does to the schedule." Jack Stelpstra of Ellis-Don Construction remarked: "I've got to go back to the drawing board."<sup>17</sup> While Cote and Bob Mayer refused to inform the *Free Press*, or the public, exactly on what lot the child's remains were found, Ed Phelps, the former head of the Regional Collection (now the Archives and Research Collections Centre [ARCC]) at The D.B. Weldon Library, UWO, and a good friend of mine, called to say that the provincial government had an advertisement in the *Free Press* in connection with the child's remains. It gave the location of the remains as "Northside [*sic.*] of Lot 18, Part 4 of Reference Plan 33R129071 on King Street." It was only later that I came upon the actual notice.<sup>18</sup>



Presumably the coffin and its remains were found in the northeast corner of lot 18, but an examination of the aforesaid plan was necessary to verify this. Phelps was good enough to go to the Land Registry Office for me to search the records for lot 18 and obtain a copy of the plan referred to in the Registrar of Cemeteries' official notice. The plan confirmed my belief that the child's remains were uncovered on what would have been the northeast corner of lot 18.<sup>19</sup> More on this later.

Meanwhile, back at home, after classes on April 4th, I was interviewed by two members of The New PL. Both John Lemon and I appeared in the film clip on the local news at 6:00 p.m. Later, in a telephone call with Randy Richmond, I learned that Vic Cote had met with the *Free Press* brass earlier in the day and attempted to persuade them to cease and desist regarding the matter of the child as the delay was hurting the city! In so many words, Cote was informed he could "Go pound salt." Cote had also stated that possible relatives would not have been contacted had it not been for the provincial ruling.<sup>20</sup> Knowing how he was operating, this was not surprising.

Randy Richmond's headline article in the Thursday, April 5<sup>th</sup> issue of the *Free Press* noted that the previous day's ruling by the Provincial Registrar Cora dela Cruz would certainly have a financial impact on the construction of the \$42-million downtown arena and that it was possibly the media attention in London, by the *Free Press* in particular, which might have frightened dela Cruz, into taking the extra precautions.<sup>21</sup> It was becoming clear to me that the only reason for the previous Friday's meeting was financial.

Research on the people who had lived, prior to 1845, on or near the site where the coffin and child's remains were found, continued over the next several days. Sue Reed from the *Free Press* arrived early on the evening of Wednesday, April 11<sup>th</sup> and took several photos of me at the kitchen table, amidst some of my books and papers relating to the Talbot Block.<sup>22</sup>

Hank Daniszewski and Randy Richmond's joint article on the child found on the Talbot Block was the feature article on the front page of the Thursday, April 12<sup>th</sup> issue. It mentioned that Vic Cote had stated that "London's mystery child" would "be buried secretly in two weeks if no relative comes forward." He further noted that the City had posted two notices<sup>23</sup> in the *Free Press* seeking any relatives of the child who was believed to have been anywhere between 18 months and three years old at the time of death. But here was the kicker. According to Cote, DNA testing was not permitted under the Cemeteries Act.<sup>24</sup> Without DNA testing, how could relationship be proven? A Catch-22 situation if ever there was one, which is exactly what City Hall wanted!

This remark by Cote, however, prompted Ken Wilson to respond in the *Free Press's* "Vox Pop" in the April 18<sup>th</sup> issue. Ken was then secretary of the Heritage London Foundation, past president of the London & Middlesex branch of the Ontario Genealogical Society (OGS), a former *Free Press* staff member and a good acquaintance of mine, mainly through our joint membership in the local branch of the OGS. Ken began by saying he would like to see documentation for "Victor Cote's assertion DNA testing (on a body) is not permitted under the Cemeteries Act of Ontario."

He then went on to say: "At the least, I suspect it's just another ploy by the city administrator, whose wires are being pulled by certain puppeteers on city council, to ram the Talbot block arena project through to a speedy conclusion, come hell or high water.

"The truth is construction will not be delayed at all by a required 30-day investigation by provincial cemetery authorities, local historians and heritage consultants into the facts surrounding the discovery of this unfortunate child's grave, as Cote himself readily admits. "But the decision to speedily re-bury the body, in secret no less, shows a total lack of respect for a human being whose family was among the earliest pioneers of the Forest City and may very well have descendants still living in the area. DNA testing, a remarkable new procedure, could be the best way to solve the mystery.

"What's the hurry? Let the historians and genealogists do their job.

"The planning and development commissioner seems to be a relative newcomer to this city and shows no appreciation of the importance of the history of people who have lived and worked here for generations."<sup>25</sup>

Very damning words indeed, and indeed quite accurate!

According to the City, and backed by Bob Mayer, it was finally made public on Wednesday, April 11<sup>th</sup> that the child was buried before the fire of February 13, 1839, on lot 18, owned by Peter Defields and “close to Lot 17 next door”, i.e., the lot in the possession of Thomas Lemon between 1835 and 1838. The City was then going to “try to determine if Defields has any descendants.”<sup>26</sup>

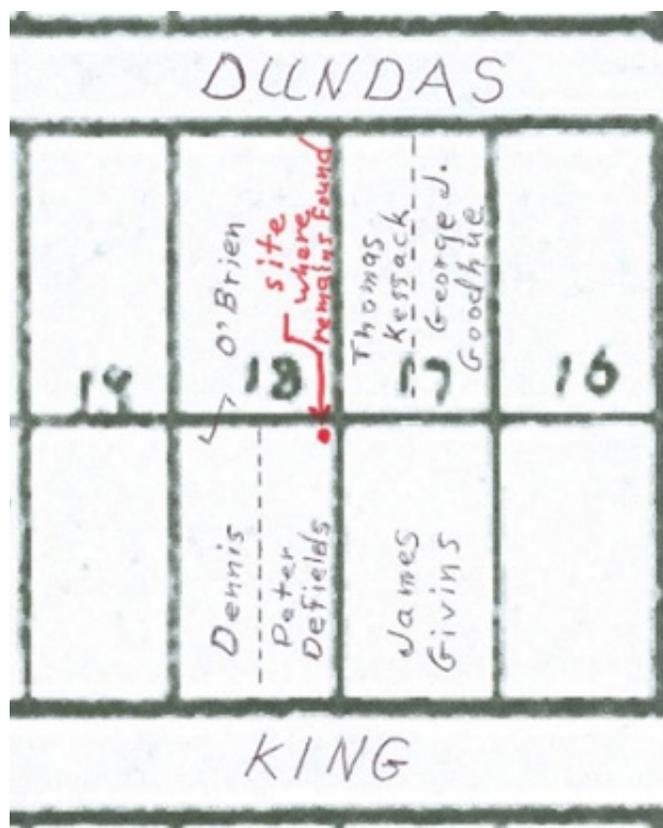
In deceiving the public by saying that the burial could only have taken place before February 1839, and then saying that it was in 1834 in one instance and “prior to 1830” in another, the City had simplified matters by claiming the child to have been that of Peter Defields.<sup>27</sup> In fact, while Defields was located on lot 18 in 1834, he did not marry Eliza Matilda Little until March 23, 1842 and had sold off the remaining portion of the lot in March 1839. As for Thomas Lemon he was already living in St. Thomas by August 1838 and did not marry until June 30, 1840. So much for the child being that of either Defields or Lemon. Nevertheless, members of the Lemon and Defields families still persisted in believing they might have a connection with the child in question. As for city officials, they were to further cover their derrieres by saying the burial could have been a squatter family. Based on years of exhaustive study of this block and the fact that the child had been interred in a coffin and facing east, the matter of a squatter family added into the mix was risible to say the least.<sup>28</sup>

If in fact the remains were found beneath three layers of fill and ash, as Dr. Hawkins seems to imply, then why didn't Bob Mayer and Vic Cote say so publicly. This would have eliminated speculation that the burial could have been as late as 1844 or even 1845. That this was not publicly stated, my knowledge of the three fires on this block, led me, at the time, to believe that the child could have been buried as late as before the Great Dundas Street Fire of October 8, 1844.

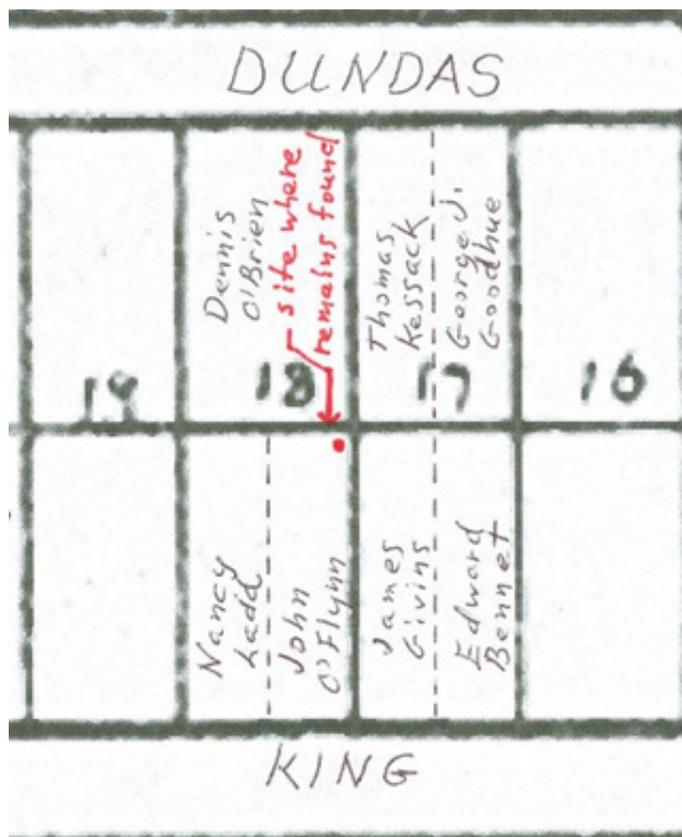
Fast forwarding to today, if we go with the scenario that the child was buried in the far northeastern corner of lot 18 on the north side of King Street before the fire of February 13, 1839, then given that the back of the lots could have still been treed—covered with stumps at least—and boundary lines not being clear, the burial could have been the child of one of the adjacent families, namely that of James Givens, Thomas Kessack or Dennis O'Brien. James Givens, a lawyer, was married and had at least two living children by 1839. As he was a member of the Church of England, there was no need to bury his child at the back of his lot as St. Paul's Church had a burial ground. Thomas Kessack, a tailor, married Jane McQueen in 1832. Their oldest three children who survived to adulthood were Christianna (b. April 1833), John (b.c. 1837) and Jane (b. Dec. 1838). There could have been children being born and dying between 1834 and 1836, but again, Kessack was a member of the Church of England and there was no necessity for him to bury his child on his property. Dennis O'Brien married Jane Shotwell in 1834. The couple are said to have had at least six children. Five, Michael (b. 1835), Ann (b.c. 1837), Mary (b. 1840), Dennis (b.c. 1842) and Edward (b.c. 1844), are known to have lived to adulthood. Dennis and the children were Roman Catholic, while Jane was a member of the Church of England.<sup>29</sup>

the southwest corner of Hitchcock Steet (now Dufferin Avenue) and Mark Lane (now Richmond Street) by August 1834 and a resident priest by September 1836. Given the existence of this burial ground and the years of birth of the children who lived to adulthood, it is rather doubtful that the O'Briens would have buried a deceased child in the back corner of their lot.

If we go with the scenario that the child was buried in the far northeastern corner of lot 18 on the north side of King Street before the Great Dundas Street Fire of October 8, 1844, then the only change we have in the immediate vicinity of where the remains were found is John O'Flynn who purchased the east half of the lot from Peter Defields on March 30, 1839, less than seven weeks after the fire in February. John and his wife Mary, who were presumably married by this time, were Catholics. If any of their children died between 1839 and 1844, it again is doubtful they would have been buried other than in St. Laurence the Martyr Churchyard at the corner of Hitchcock Street and Mark Lane. This leaves me at a loss as to who the parents of the child buried at the far northeast corner of lot 18, north side of King Street could have been.



Property ownership of selected lots on the eve of the fire of February 13, 1839



**Property ownership of selected lots on the eve of the fire of October 8, 1844**

Returning to the *Free Press* issue of Thursday, April 12, 2001, mention was made of the fact that, unbeknownst to me, Rose Marie Wagner, the owner of a cleaning business in London and my youngest sister, had had her employees and dozens of her customers pressing her to find some way to help. “We decided we want to raise some funds together to get a new casket, or help with the funeral.”<sup>30</sup>

Even schoolchildren were getting involved. A grade 7 class at Knollwood Park Public School had begun studying the subject when stories first appeared in the *Free Press*. Betty Spicer, the former head of the London Room at the London Public Library, declared: “Perhaps we should give the child a respectful memorial, nothing very elaborate. The discovery takes us back to the early days of London. It gives us a sense of something we can touch. We don’t have too much from those early days.”<sup>31</sup>

On Easter Monday, April 16<sup>th</sup>, I learned that Randy Richmond had tried to find out where on lot 18 the child’s remains were found but Bob Mayers declined to reveal this. Meanwhile, I had been working on a draft of a letter to Cora dela Cruz and Ed Phelps had offered to go to the Land Registry Office the next day to make a copy of the plan referred to in dela Cruz’s notice.<sup>32</sup> Phelps

telephoned on Tuesday to say that he had obtained the required plan from the Registry Office and that the location of the grave site would have been to the rear of the east half of lot 18 on the north side of King Street. This would have been the lot portion sold by Peter Defields to John O’Flynn in March 1839. City Hall would have known all this as Norma Martin had been hired to do a title search of lot 18, and yet Vic Cote and his cronies chose not to do anything with this information.<sup>33</sup>

Jonathan Sher’s front page article in the Wednesday, April 18th issue of the *Free Press* noted that Melody (DeFields) McMillian, a possible descendant of Peter Defields, was interested in the possibility of the child found on lot 18 being related to the Defields family.<sup>34</sup>

Meanwhile, I had already pointed out to Sher, that it did not appear that Peter Defields was married at the time he had possession of this lot but it could be a child of relatives of his. I had also noted that, as property lines were not precise, the child could have also belonged to that of the John O’Flynn, Dennis O’Brien or Thomas Kessask families. As already noted, O’Brien occupied lot 18 on the south side of Dundas Street, immediately north of the lot on which the child’s remains had been found, and Kessask resided on the adjacent lot 17.

All this did not sit well with City Hall and its spokesperson Vic Cote who was overseeing construction of the \$42-million arena on the Talbot Block. He was opposed to DNA testing of families not connected to the Defields. I could just picture him and other city officials putting their hands over their ears and refusing to hear anything more regarding my ongoing research. Meanwhile, the Provincial Registrar Cora dela Cruz had stated that any claim by a family to represent the child could be accepted by the city or rejected and taken to arbitrators. If a family were deemed to represent the child, its consent would be needed before the body could be removed.<sup>35</sup> Of course, any possible further delay on the removal of the remains could be costly to the City and money was the prime, if not the only, consideration of City Hall. The swelling interest of the public, in London and beyond, in the finding of the coffin and remains of the child be damned!

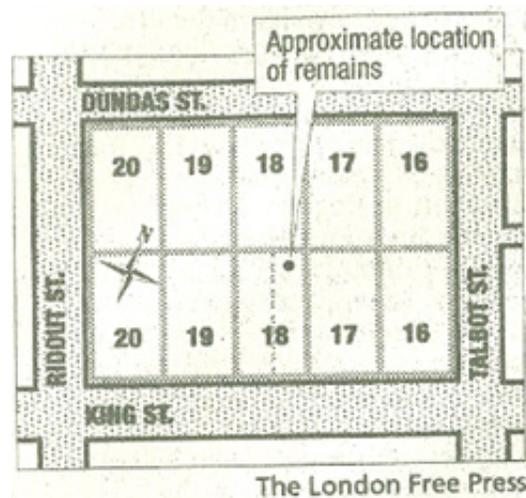
Ken Wilson’s piece in the “**Vox Pop**” section of the *Free Press*, already noted, also appeared in the issue of April 18<sup>th</sup>.<sup>36</sup>

Randy Richmond’s article of Thursday, April 19<sup>th</sup> pointed out that, based on conversations with Cora dela Cruz, “Multiple claims on London’s mystery tot could lead to a lengthy arbitration process that might delay removal of the remains from the downtown arena site for years.” Dela Cruz further stated, however, that the “solution to the problem may come from a church ... If too many competing interests come forward, the province can order the remains handed over to a representative of the church of the family that likely buried the child.”<sup>37</sup>

Randy Richmond was present at the Thursday afternoon session I had with the students at the Montessori Junior High School, on the southeast corner of Waterloo and Piccadilly streets, where the coffin, the child’s remains and the controversy surrounding all of this were discussed.

Meanwhile, Andrew Nelson, an anthropologist at the University of Western Ontario, had called to say his team was willing to do a DNA analysis of the child's remains free of charge. This in turn led me to call the Lemon family in St. Thomas where I learned that John Lemon's daughter, Nancy Lemon Whitney of London, was prepared to have her DNA tested against that of the child in question. All this information was relayed to Randy Richmond.<sup>38</sup>

Randy had two articles in the Sunday, April 22<sup>nd</sup> issue of the *Free Press*. One dealt with the interest of students at Montessori Junior High and Knollwood Park Public schools in what had come to be known as "the mystery tot." The other noted that members of the DeFields family had notified the Province of their interest in their possible connection with the child and Mayor Ann Marie DeCicco's announcement, after consultation with Planning Commissioner Vic Cote, "about some way for the public to honour the child." DeCicco, however, "stood firm on the city's desire to bury the child in a private ceremony, but said the location of the gravesite might be revealed after so people can pay their respects."<sup>39</sup> This latter article also had a plan showing the approximate location of the remains on the Talbot Block.



Earlier, the *Free Press* had asked the public to weigh in on how tribute should be paid to the memory of the tot. It then offered three possibilities: hold a public funeral, erect a bronze plaque commemorating the child at the arena site on the Talbot Block or hold a private reburial at an undisclosed site.<sup>40</sup>

Randy also noted that, while Bob Mayer put the burial before the fire of February 13, 1839, which destroyed several buildings on the Talbot Block, based on his own extensive research, I, on the other hand, did not believe that fire had spread as far as the site where the coffin had been found. As noted earlier, Randy stated that I believed the burial took place sometime before the Great Dundas Street Fire of October 15, 1844, beneath the ashes of which the coffin and child had been found some two feet beneath the surface. Randy further stated that, based on my most recent research

of the ownership of the east half of the lot on which the discovery had been made, this could very well be that of a daughter of John O’Flynn and his wife Mary. O’Flynn had purchased this parcel of land in 1839, built a house and resided there for several years. He appears of have had at least three children. There are records showing O’Flynn’s older children survived into adulthood but nothing found for a daughter born before 1842.<sup>41</sup>

On Monday, April 24<sup>th</sup>, my letter to Cora dela Cruz, requesting that we might have the coffin examined for dating and the child’s remains given a DNA test, was sent by Priority Courier.<sup>42</sup> By this time, I had also been in contact with a genealogical network known as RootsWeb, the Ontario Genealogical Society and City Council where I shared “my findings and the stonewalling we were receiving from the bureaucracy at City Hall. Meanwhile, Steve Peters of St. Thomas, a local MPP, and Stephen Harding, who was working at what was then known as the J.J. Talman Regional Collection (now ARCC), both good acquaintances of mine, “offered encouragement and assistance.”<sup>43</sup>

### **What’s to Be Done with the Child’s Remains**

Randy’s article in the *Free Press* the next day, noted that the descendants of the Lemon family, like that of the DeFields, had notified dela Cruz that “they would like to undergo DNA testing to see if they’re related to the child...” The family also wanted to attend the burial, if only out of respect to the child and the past. Nancy Lemon Whitney “would like the descendants of families who lived near the child to attend the funeral” as well. It was noted that, as of yet, “City officials have not settled on any burial plans.”

Randy also pointed out that I had informed him that, given the closeness of the burial site to the far northeastern corner of the property, its proximity to three other properties and that at best the area was littered with stumps or still in primeval woods, “Any number of people living in the area before 1844 could have buried the child” on this particular spot. Presently, my money was either on a child of John O’Flynn or Dennis O’Brien. The O’Briens lived on the lot immediately north of the burial site and I had adult records for all but one of the O’Brien children.<sup>44</sup>

Joe Matyas’ article in the *Free Press* on Wednesday, April 25<sup>th</sup> revealed to the public that the Bio-archeology Research Facility, under the leadership of Professor Andrew Nelson had “offered to find answers to questions about the remains” of “the mystery tot.” This could include the sex of the child. Matyas noted that: “The team of four anthropologists and two research scientists work with state-of-the-art technology on genetic and chemical analysis of human remains.”<sup>45</sup> It was also pointed out that today [April 25<sup>th</sup>] was “the last day for anyone to claim the child’s bones” and that so far two families, i.e., the DeFields and Lemon, had “declared an interest to the registrar of the provincial Cemeteries Act.”<sup>46</sup>

Simone Joseph's article of Friday, April 27<sup>th</sup> was also revealing in that it noted that Kathleen McDonald had submitted a letter and genealogical data to Cora dela Cruz the previous Friday but, to date, had received no response. A letter had also been submitted to dela Cruz, by Karen Young DeZorzi who stated that her grandmother was a sister of Thomas Lemon who owned lot 17, on the north side of King Street between 1835 and 1838. In DeZorzi's case, she had received a telephone call "from a city official," presumably Vic Cote, who "who tried to dissuade her from getting DNA testing, citing high cost and concerns of other possible relatives." According to DeZorzi, "They (the city) are discouraging people from doing the DNA testing. They just want to hurry up and get the baby in the ground."<sup>47</sup>

The editor of the *Free Press*, Larry Cornies, weighed in with his own article in the Saturday, April 28<sup>th</sup> issue. In it he summarized all that had transpired to date and agreed that something should be done to pay tribute to this child as a "teachable moment...but making a circus of its recovery would be the wrong thing to do."<sup>48</sup>

As noted earlier, I had been in correspondence with Geoff Anderson, mainly in connection with the Defields family. On April 24<sup>th</sup> he had written to Cornies "to contribute to the discussion of memorializing the 'Talbot tot' in the event that no family claims him/her".<sup>49</sup> The editor ended his article by printing Geoff's following tribute which might be placed on "a simple memorial marker" on the subsequent new burial spot for the child's remains.

"We mark this unknown child's resting place to honour and abidingly recognize the pioneer children of our community, whose lives, regrettably, were never fully lived. As Londoners, we stand together, hand in hand with this young child, whose reach through time has found us. By this remembrance, may all generations, both current and future, be reminded to cherish, nurture and celebrate the children of our great city."<sup>50</sup>

By Sunday, April 29<sup>th</sup>, I learned that Charles Addington, an acquaintance of mine of many years standing who was also very interested in London's past, had sent a letter to City Hall supporting the work of myself and others in uncovering as much as possible from a study of the child's remains and the coffin itself.<sup>51</sup>

I also wrote an email to Geoff Anderson, expressing how moved I was by his tribute to the "mystery tot" as appeared in Cornies column, that I was on the trail of identifying John O'Flynn's wife, that the O'Flynn's, like the O'Briens were Roman Catholics and that "opens up a whole new can of worms as to where the child's remains should be interred."<sup>52</sup>

A *Free Press* staff article in the Monday, April 30<sup>th</sup> issue noted that, although the deadline for potential relatives to make contact with Cora dela Cruz had expired the previous Wednesday, city officials were still waiting word as to what might happen with the child's remains.<sup>53</sup>

As previously arranged, I met with Heather Cohen of CBC radio Windsor, in the staffroom at CCH on the afternoon of the same day for an interview relating to all the interest and controversy surrounding the remains of “the mystery tot.” A fax also arrived at the school this afternoon from Cora dela Cruz. As expected, it stated that the responsibility for the testing of the coffin wood and the child’s remains rested with the representative of the child, in this case the city. I made a photocopy of the fax and, on the way home, stopped off at the Free Press Building on York Street, where it was given to Randy Richmond. I later noted in my diary that: “As the city will not permit DNA testing, we may never learn the sex of the child, let alone its identity.”<sup>54</sup>

Randy’s article in the Tuesday, May 1<sup>st</sup> issue of the *Free Press* gave further details on how, the previous week, before the Wednesday, April 25<sup>th</sup> provincial deadline for claimants to come forward, Karen Young Dezorzi, had been pressured by a city official, again presumably Vic Cote, “to stop her request for DNA testing on the remains” owing to “the cost and damage to the body.” “They were really kind of rude,” Dezorzi told Randy on Monday, April 30<sup>th</sup>. “They kept saying, ‘I don’t want to see this in the press tomorrow.’ Three times they said that.” Again, this harked back to Cote’s attempt to intimidate me at that meeting at City Hall on the afternoon of Friday, March 31<sup>st</sup>. Again, while Dezorzi would not identify the individual, she said that this person called to apologize after her story had appeared in the Friday, April 27<sup>th</sup> issue of the *Free Press* as already noted.

Meanwhile, Cote had refused to answer Dezorzi’s charges or to name a third claimant concerning the child’s remains. He did inform Randy that “he should have a report on the remains ready for a board of control meeting tomorrow [Tuesday, May 1<sup>st</sup>]. The city should know the province’s ruling on the remains soon after...” Cote added that “Crews can continue to work around the remains for another three weeks without delaying the arena project” and that “The city hopes to avoid the cost and time required to test the remains to determine sex, age or possible relations of the child.”<sup>55</sup> And this is the same City Hall which claims to support and maintain London’s heritage!

Chip Martin, the City Hall reporter for the *Free Press*, had an article in the issue of Friday, May 4<sup>th</sup>. In it he argued that the remains, lying on site “under a tarp and temporary earth cover to protect it from the elements” amid the rumbling and sound of heavy equipment surrounding it, “must be moved and reburied as soon as possible.” He also suggested that “A marker or plaque should be placed at the grave and at the new downtown project.”<sup>56</sup>

Sometime before this, there had been an article in the *Globe and Mail* of Toronto on the child’s remains and coffin found on the Talbot Block. I stopped by Fred Armstrong’s place on my way home from another day of teaching and was given a copy. Fred was a former history professor of mine at Western and later collaborated on several research and writing projects.

May 4<sup>th</sup> also saw the Province decide to allow the City to represent the child’s remains. City Hall, in turn, announced that it was determined not to proceed with any DNA testing, not even to

determine the sex of the child. I was called upon by the New PL, about 4:00 p.m., for my reaction to this. The interview was conducted by Bryan Bicknell on our veranda in time for the 6 o'clock news.<sup>57</sup>

Moving at warp speed in anticipation that the Province would rule "Metropolitan United church represented the child because the original landowners were linked to the Methodist Church a forerunner of the United Church,"<sup>58</sup> discussions between City Hall and the Rev. Robert Ripley, the senior minister at Metropolitan United Church were held without any points of disagreement. There would be no DNA testing of the child's remains; the remains would be reinterred in a private service to which the three families that claimed a connection to the child would be invited to attend; and a public memorial service "would be held later to honour the unknown child and celebrate the tot's life." Karen Young DeZorzi was angered the DNA testing would not be permitted to determine at least the age and the sex of the child. I agreed with Mayor Anne Marie DeCicco that at least the public memorial service would "give residents a chance to pay their respects...." All this was reported in the *Free Press*, the next day, by John Miner.<sup>59</sup>

The Saturday, May 5<sup>th</sup> issue also carried a very fine article by Dr. Andrew Nelson of Western's Department of Anthropology on the limitations of DNA testing with a special emphasis on solving "the mystery of the Talbot tot."<sup>60</sup> Unfortunately, all this was after the fact as City Hall and the Rev. Robert Ripley had agreed there would be no DNA testing of the child's remains.

Jim Chapman had a fanciful letter in the same issue. He dated the letter "London, Canada West Summer, 1834" and spoke of the town at the time and the burial of a tiny coffin in "the far side of a rough garden" behind a house. In a footnote, Jim stated: "Provincial regulation notwithstanding, the casket should be quietly re-interred under a suitable memorial in the Fanshawe Pioneer Village. Another suggestion at the time was the Peace Garden at the Forks of the Thames."<sup>61</sup>

Nelson's and Chapman's articles moved Geoff Anderson to send off an email to Larry Cornies and James Reaney, the latter a reporter for the *Free Press*. Geoff commended the paper on "doing an excellent job of not only covering the Talbot tot story, but of being a forum to public opinion." He went on to suggest Siloam Cemetery on Fanshawe Park Road East would be the best place for the re-interment of the child's remains and provided reasons for this location.<sup>62</sup>

Late on the afternoon of Sunday, May 6<sup>th</sup>, the "much deteriorated wooden coffin" and child's remains were disinterred.<sup>63</sup> "Present at the disinterment were municipal officials, representatives of Ellis-Don Construction Ltd., representatives of the Medical Officer of Health, Rev. Ripley of Metropolitan United Church, members of the staff of the James A. Harris Funeral Home, physical anthropologist Megan Cook who briefly examined the remains to confirm the early conclusion of the police investigation, and MHCI personnel who conducted the disinterment." The new wooden casket, into which the old coffin and remains were placed, had been donated by the Funeral Home. All was "given into the care and custody of Steve Harris, the funeral director, to be safeguarded until the time of re-interment."<sup>64</sup>

## The Final Outcome

On Monday, May 7<sup>th</sup>, Karen Young Dezorzi revealed to the Free Press that the date for the reburial of the remains found on the Talbot Block would take place later in the week. She could not reveal the date, saying that “the city has asked her to keep the information secret.” She was angry that “The city is doing too little to involve families in planning the private service.” The Rev. Robert Ripley confirmed that “families that may be related to the child can’t add anything to the public service” and “would not confirm when or where the private reburial will be held.” He did say that “There will be a public service at a separate time to honor the child and other pioneer children”. Ripley further added that the four individuals representing the DeFields and Lemon families were invited to both the private and public ceremonies and would “be consulted about the proper wording for the headstone”.<sup>65</sup>

About 10 people attended the private burial for the child on Wednesday, May 9<sup>th</sup>. These included Mayor Anne Marie DeCicco, Karen Young DeZorzi and her mother who had Lemon connections and at least one member of the DeFields family. The service was conducted by Rev. Robert Ripley. The honey oak casket, containing the child’s remains and original wooden coffin, was buried in the children’s section of Oakland Cemetery on the south side of Oxford Street West. There was a promise that the grave site would be later marked with a memorial plaque. Even DeZorzi, who earlier had been critical of the City’s handling of the matter of the child’s remains, had praise for the way the service was organized.

The City had conducted the plans for the re-interment of the remains and the burial service itself in secrecy and it was only after the service that a statement was issued. This was reported in the *Free Press* the next day.<sup>66</sup>

Meanwhile, Chris Grosskurth of CBC Radio in Toronto had done an interview with me at CCH in the early afternoon. It was he who informed me of the heretofore memorial service for the child at Metropolitan United Church, late this morning, and the interment in Oakland Cemetery.

I was both hurt and angry that I had not been invited to attend, considering all the research I had done to learn of the possible identity of the child, but then was keenly aware that it was because of what I had uncovered over more than a month and the media frenzy it produced that I was kept in the dark about the secret service and burial. Sometime later I learned that a certain local female freelance writer was quite pleased that I had been excluded from such an invite.

After supper, the same day, my wife and I took a drive to Oakland Cemetery and, based on Grosskurth’s directions—he having visited the plot before meeting me this afternoon—were able to locate the grave. Photographs were taken.<sup>67</sup>

The interview with Chris Grosskurth on Wednesday was aired between 6:00 and 6:30 p.m. on Saturday, May 12<sup>th</sup> and I taped it.<sup>68</sup>

As announced in the *Free Press* the previous Thursday, a public service for the “Talbot Tot” was held at noon, on Monday, May 14<sup>th</sup>, at Metropolitan United Church, with Rev. Robert Ripley officiating. Some 80 persons attended, including DeCicco, who gave an address, Jan Trimble, an historian from Western, nine pupils from Knollwood Park Public School—one of whom “read the poem she had written to express her thoughts, *Free Press* reporter Joe Matyas and photographer Susan Bradnam.<sup>69</sup> I did not attend as I was still reeling from being slighted by Cote, DeCicco and Ripley for not being invited to the service held the previous Wednesday. I would certainly have given assurances that I would not reveal beforehand the time and location of the service. Cote and DeCicco may not have appreciated the fact that my research had caused difficulties in keeping the City’s \$42-million project on schedule, but one would think they could rise above such pettiness at a time like this. Apparently not! I did, however, watch the video clip on the 6:00 p.m. news.<sup>70</sup>

In addition to Matyas’ article and DeCicco’s address, the Tuesday, May 15<sup>th</sup> issue of the *Free Press* had an editorial which described the memorial of the previous day as “A fitting farewell.”<sup>71</sup>

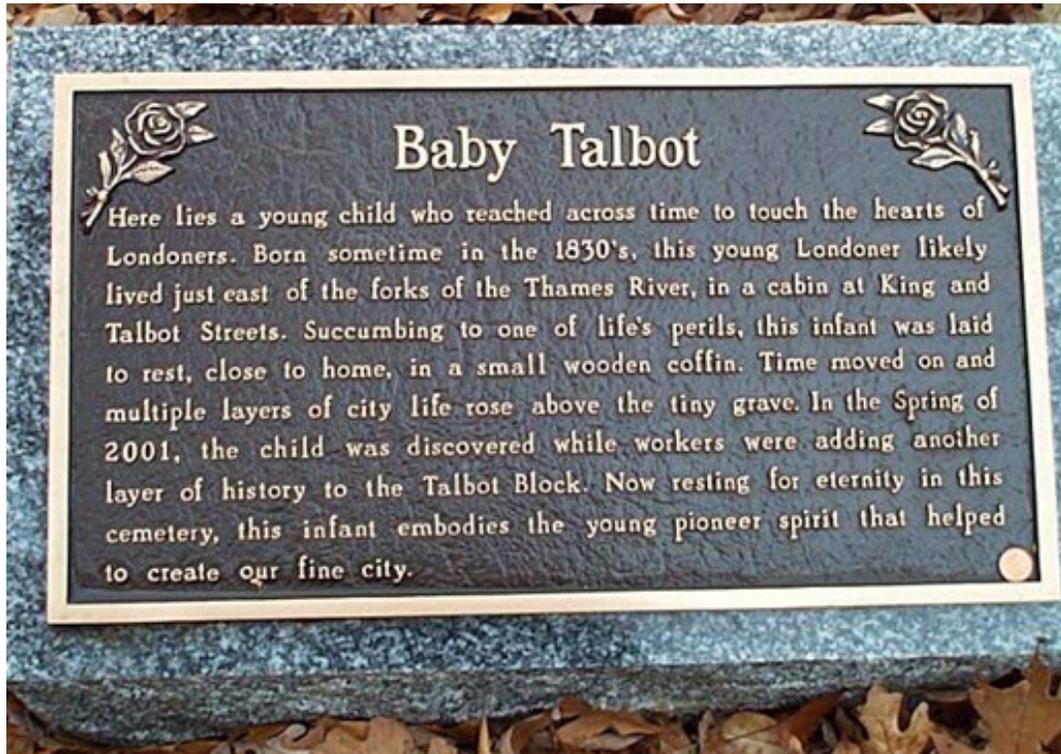
Saturday, May 19<sup>th</sup> saw two articles in the *Free Press* relating to the “Talbot Tot.” One was the “meditation” delivered by Rev. Robert Ripley at the service the previous Monday and the other was by Helen Connell.

I certainly took issue with Ripley’s statement that “what could be done was done” by “historians, archeologists, anthropologists, geneticists, officials of provincial and municipal government and families of those who once lived on the Talbot block”.<sup>72</sup> Certainly, City Hall officials did all in their power to block the work of historians, archeologists, anthropologists and geneticists, and Provincial Registrar Cora dela Cruz caved in to the wishes of City Hall.

I had an even greater disagreement with the content of Connell’s article. She stated that: “It was a relief when the city decided against spending tax dollars” to use “DNA testing to find out how our mystery child died.” In fact, the main point of DNA testing was to determine the family identity and sex of the child. Of course, in her position as executive director of the United Way of London and Middlesex, it was understandable that Connell would declare: “If there’s money burning holes in anyone’s pocket, then invest it with organizations, such as the Thames Valley Children’s Centre....”<sup>73</sup>

With these two articles, media coverage of the “Talbot Tot” virtually ceased.

Later in the year, the City came through on its intentions and placed a granite stone with a bronze plaque at the gravesite of the “Talbot Tot” in Oakland Cemetery. For this, City Hall officials have my full praise!



On October 11<sup>th</sup> I gave a talk, in part relating the saga of the Talbot Tot, to the Elgin St. Thomas Archives Association in St. Thomas. This was followed on February 12, 2002 with a similar presentation to the London and southwestern Branch: United Empire Loyalists in London.<sup>74</sup> Later in 2001, there was an academic article by Dr. J. Trevor Hawkins and Robert G. Mayer dealing with the professional and social responsibilities pertaining to the controversy surrounding what should have been done after the coffin and remains were uncovered. They concluded by siding with City Hall, which is understandable, as they were in the pockets of City Hall and basically relied on City Hall officials or in the employ of City Hall for their information. Certainly, I was not consulted and only learned of this article this year!<sup>75</sup>

A few years later, I was asked to do a brief write-up on "The Talbot Tot." This appeared as the first of the *100 Fascinating Londoners* in 2005.<sup>76</sup>

## Conclusion

It is my firm belief that City Hall, represented by Vic Cote and Anne Marie DeCicco in particular, dropped the ball on this occasion. With the great outpouring of interest in who the child might be, City Hall could have taken a leadership role in providing Londoners with a greater insight

into their past. Instead, the City set up roadblocks or attempted to do so at every turn, starting with Vic Cote's unsuccessful attempt to muzzle me by means of having Dr. Trevor Hawkins throwing out red herrings and Cote's own intimidation tactics. Money and development were the prime motivators for City Hall and heritage and the expressed wishes of the public be damned! We also see Provincial Registrar Cora dela Cruz and the Church, represented by the Rev. Robert Ripley, siding with City Hall and ignoring the general wishes of Londoners, namely that further investigation be done to learn something of the child's sex, age and identity.

It is also my firm belief, in all humility, that just as with the removal of the Rev. John Connelly from the equation there would have been no massacre of the Donnelly family in 1880, so with my removal from research into the identity of the child, there would have been no memorial service or memorial plaque dedicated to the child discovered on the Talbot Block. One has only to research what has become of other human remains, especially of single individuals, uncovered within the City, to see this played out.<sup>73</sup> In this instance at least, the devil must be given his due, but this was only because of the outpouring of public interest in the "Talbot Tot."

## Endnotes

1. Herman Goodden, "Maybe it's not too late for the Talbot streetscape dream," *The London Free Press [LFP]*, July 5, 1986, A11; Debora Van Brenk, "1,500 form human chain to save streetscape," *LFP*, August 29, 1988, B1, B2; Hank Daniszewski, "Sun may have set on Talbot streetscape," *LFP*, September 17, 1991, B1; Chip Martin, "A dream dies, Cambridge set to quit the city," *LFP*, July 10, 1991, A1, A2.
2. Dan Brock, Diary [hereinafter cited as Diary], *Wtorek, 27 marzec 2001 r.*; John Milner and Simone Joseph, "Coffin find seals arena site," *LFP*, March 28, 2001, A1, A9; Simone Joseph, "Grave find stirs mystery," *LFP*, March 29, 2001, A3; Dr. J. Trevor Hawkins and Robert G. Mayer, "The Talbot Tot Being an Account of Professional and Social Responsibilities," Ontario Archaeological Society *Arch Notes* (November/December 2001), 13; John Lisowski to Dan Brock, email, September 19, 2022. During the first half of the 1980s, I studied Polish at the University of Western Ontario, and tend to interject Polish words and phrases into my diary so as not to completely lose what I had learned.
3. Back in 1991, Mayer, who was chairperson of the archeological subcommittee of the Local Architectural conservation Advisory committee (LACAC), had advocated for an archeological study of this block. "If we are not going to mitigate the loss of these resources, then heritage means nothing in this city." I had noted that in the past, "We missed some opportunities (to excavate archeological remains), like the new court house." Shelley Lawson, "Talbot block a last chance to uncover past," *LFP*, July 10, 1991, A1, A2
4. Milner and Joseph, "Coffin find seals arena site," *LFP*, March 28, 2001, A1, A9; Simone Joseph, "Grave find stirs mystery," *LFP*, March 29, 2001, A3. Andrew Nelson, DNA testing limits must be recognized," *LFP*, May 5, 2001, F8.
5. Diary, *Środa, 28 marzec 2001 r.*; Hawkins and Mayer, 11.
6. Milner and Joseph, "Coffin find seals arena site," *LFP*, March 28, 2001, A1, A9.

7. Joseph, "Grave find stirs mystery," *LFP*, March 29, 2001, A3; Ian Gillespie, "Discovery of tot's casket new verse in Talbot lore," *LFP*, March 29, 2011.
8. Joe Matyas, "Profs offering help to ID mystery tot," *LFP*, April 25, 2001, A3
9. Diary, *Czwartek*, 29 marzec 2001 r.
10. Randy Richmond, "Mystery tot's kin sought," *LFP*, March 30, 2001, A1; A8
11. Diary, *Piątek*, 30 marzec 2001 r.
12. Hawkins and Mayer, "The Talbot Tot Being an Account of Professional and Social Responsibilities," *Arch Notes* (November/December 2001), 12, 13.
13. Diary, *Piątek*, 30 marzec 2001 r. Dr. Hawkins was later to write that the meeting had been "private and confidential" but I certainly was not aware of this! Hawkins and Mayer, "The Talbot Tot Being an Account of Professional and Social Responsibilities," *Arch Notes* (November/December 2001), 14.
14. Dan Brock, "Babies' Bones, Local Politics, and the Value of Archival Data," 3, published paper prepared for talk given on October 11, 2001, to the Elgin St. Thomas Archives Association at the St. Thomas Public Library, Dan Brock, private collection.
15. Randy Richmond, "St. Thomas man believes he may be child's relative," *LFP*, March 31, 2001, A1, A14; Diary, *Sobota*, 31 marzec 2001 r.
16. Diary, *Wtorek*, 3 kwiecień 2001 r.; Brock, "Babies' Bones, Local Politics, and the Value of Archival Data," 5. On a more serious note, Daph Bolton of Komoka, in a brief letter to the editor, suggested the new arena be named after the child whose remains were found on the site. Daph Bolton, "Name new arena after buried child," *LFP*, April 30, 2001, A10.
17. Randy Richmond, "Mystery tot must stay put 30 days," *LFP*, April 4, 2001, A1, A8.
18. Diary, *Środa*, 4 kwiecień 2001 r.; "Notice..." *LFP*, April 4, 2001, E7. This notice also appeared in the issue of April 11, 2001, D6
19. Brock, "Babies' Bones, Local Politics, and the Value of Archival Data," 5.
20. Diary, *Środa*, 4 kwiecień 2001 r.
21. Randy Richmond, "Body find stalls arena work," *LFP*, April 5, 2001, A1, A10.
22. Diary, *Środa*, 11 kwiecień 2001 r.
23. These notices appear to be the ones cited in n. 17.
24. Hank Daniszewski and Randy Richmond, "Secrecy shrouds tot's burial," *LFP*, April 12, 2001, A1, A8.
25. Ken Wilson, "Haste over tot, arena issue questioned," *LFP*, April 18, 2001, A13.
26. Daniszewski and Richmond, "Secrecy shrouds tot's burial," *LFP*, April 12, 2001, A8.
27. Daniszewski and Richmond, "Secrecy shrouds tot's burial," *LFP*, April 12, 2001, A8; Hawkins and Mayer, "The Talbot Tot Being an Account of Professional and Social Responsibilities," *Arch Notes* (November/-December 2001), 13. Bob Mayer had read my work on the fires of 1839, 1844 and 1845 which had occurred on this block. But I did not believe the 1839 fire had reached the area where the remains were found and believe that of 1844 was more likely the one which had deposited the ashes over the site. Daniel J. Brock, "Half of London in Ruin! London's Great Fires of 1844 and 1845," Guy St-Denis, ed., *Simcoe's Choice Celebrating London's Bicentennial 1793-1993* (1992: Dundurn Press), 116-136.
28. My findings here and elsewhere are based on a study of the land registry records, Upper Canada land petitions, contemporary newsletters and genealogy web sites such as Ancestry and the former RootsWeb.

29. 1861 Census, Canada West, Middlesex, Westminster, Enumeration District 2, p. 13, lines 36-42; O'Brien monument, St. Mary's Ward, St. Peter's Cemetery, London.
30. Daniszewski and Richmond, "Secrecy shrouds tot's burial," *LFP*, April 12, 2001, A8; I learned the next day that Rose had gotten a number of people, including our mother, to telephone the *Free Press* and comment on what should be done to honour the child whose resting place has been disturbed after some 160 years. Diary, *Piątek*, 13 *kwiecień* 2001 r. I was also to learn that other telephone calls, emails and letters from the public, concerning this tot, were being received by City Hall as well as the *Free Press*.
31. Daniszewski and Richmond, "Secrecy shrouds tot's burial," *LFP*, April 12, 2001, A1, A8.
32. Diary, *Poniedziałek*, 16 *kwiecień* 2001 r.
33. Diary, *Wtorek*, 17 *kwiecień* 2001 r.; *Sobota*, 19 *mai* 2001 r.
34. Jonathan Sher, "Family seeks link to dead tot," *LFP*, April 18, 2001, A1, A7.
35. Randy Richmond, "Settling mystery tot claims may take time," *LFP*, April 19, 2001, A3.
36. Wilson, "Haste over tot, arena issue questioned," *LFP*, April 18, 2001, A13.
37. Richmond, "Settling mystery tot claims may take time," *LFP*, April 19, 2001, A3.
38. Diary, *Czwartek*, 19 *kwiecień* 2001 r.
39. Randy Richmond, "Family alerts province to link to buried tot," *LFP*, April 22, 2001, A1, A3; Randy Richmond, "Make mystery tot's dignity No. 1: Kids," *LFP*, April 22, 2001, A3.
40. Daniszewski and Richmond, "Secrecy shrouds tot's burial," *LFP*, April 12, 2021, A8.
41. Richmond, "Family alerts province to link to buried tot," *LFP*, April 22, 2001, A3.
42. Diary, *Poniedziałek*, 23 *kwiecień* 2001 r.
43. Dan Brock, "Pioneer Tots and Local Politics," 9, unpublished paper prepared for talk given on February 12, 2002, to the London and Southwestern Branch: United Empire Loyalists, 790 Wonderland Rd., Dan Brock, private collection.
44. Randy Richmond, "Family seeks tests for link to buried tot," *LFP*, April 24, 2001, A3.
45. Among the team of anthropologists were Doctors Michael Spence and Robert Hegele. Andrew Nelson, DNA testing limits must be recognized," *LFP*, May 5, 2001, F8.
46. Joe Matyas, "Profs offering help to ID mystery tot," *LFP*, April 25, 2001, A3.
47. Simone Joseph, "Mystery top case remains unsettled," *LFP*, April 27, 2001, A3
48. Larry Cornies, "Child's remains unifying symbol for city," *LFP*, April 28, 2001, H1
49. G.R. Anderson to Larry Cornies, April 24, 2001, Talbot Tot file, Cindy Hartman, private collection.
50. Cornies, "Child's remains," *LFP*, April 28, 2001, H1
51. Diary, *Niedziela*, 29 *kwiecień* 2001 r.
52. Dan Brock to Geoff Anderson, email, April 29, 2001, Talbot Tot file, Cindy Hartman, private collection.
53. Free Press staff, "Talbot tot's fate not yet decided," *LFP*, April 30, 2001, A3.
54. Diary, *Poniedziałek*, 30 *kwiecień* 2001 r.
55. Randy Richmond, "Three parties claim links to mystery tot," *LFP*, May 1, 2001, A1, A7.
56. Chip Martin, "Respect for tot demands burial soon," *LFP*, May 4, 2001, A12.
57. Diary, *Piątek*, 4 *mai* 2001 r.
58. This may have been true for Thomas Lemon the cabinet maker, who had been located on lot 17 on the north side of King Street but was living in St. Thomas by August 1838, and Peter Defields who was located on the adjacent lot 18 in 1834 but had completely sold off the remaining portion of his lot by March 1839. The City, however, deliberately chose to ignore my findings, that John O'Flynn, who had purchased the east half of lot 18 from Defields in late March 1839, and Dennis O'Brien, who had settled immediately north on lot 18 south side of Dundas Street—both being Roman Catholics—

had far stronger claims to being the father of the child's remains found in the far northeast corner of O'Flynn's property. Therefore, in my opinion, **at the time**, it would have made more sense for City Hall to have approached the rector of St. Peter's Basilica regarding the service and place of burial of the child's remains.

59. John Miner, "United Church to decide fate of mystery tot," *LFP*, May 5, 2001, A1, A16. Mayor DeCicco agreed that photographs of the coffin on my part "was a reasonable request," but this never happened. Dan Brock, "Pioneer Tots and Local Politics," 11.
60. Nelson, DNA testing limits must be recognized," *LFP*, May 5, 2001, F8.
61. Jim Chapman, "Pioneer's letter laments child's death," *LFP*, May 5, 2001, F9.
62. Geoff Anderson to Larry Cornies and James Reaney, email, c. May 5, 2001, Talbot Tot file, Cindy Hartman, private collection.
63. Doing something on a Sunday, when the least number of people would be around to see what was being done, is a ploy often used. As Barry Wells, aka Butch McLarty, was to post on Facebook on March 27, 2022. "The discovery of the tot's human remains delayed the construction of the John Labatt Centre to the point that the old Talbot Inn at the southwest corner of Dundas and Talbot was suddenly demolished by the City of London on a Sunday morning, with the heritage easement on the building's façade still in place, thereby misusing a purported 'heritage alteration permit.' Originally, the old bricks from the Talbot Inn were to be used on the new facade of the JLC, but after a power-washing were too wet. Instead, new "retumbled bricks" (artificially scuffed-up bricks) were used. It was a local heritage fiasco that should have attracted charges under the Ontario Heritage Act, but didn't, since the City of London, normally the local heritage authority, was the transgressor. "I wrote an article about this heritage fiasco in SCENE magazine, criticizing the City of London, called "Heritage Bozos" which really set Vic Cote off. I was subsequently informed by London planning lawyer Alan Patton that Cote wanted to sue me and SCENE for libel but he realized I was correct in my assessment, regarding the Sunday morning demo of the Talbot Inn."
64. Simone Joseph, "Mystery tot reburial scheduled this week," *LFP*, May 8, 2001, A3.
65. Hawkins and Mayer, "The Talbot Tot Being an Account of Professional and Social Responsibilities," *Arch Notes* (November/December 2001), 15.
66. John Miner, Arena tot reburied in private service," *LFP*, May 10, 2001, A1, A11.
67. Diary, *Środa*, 9 mai 2001 r.
68. Diary, *Sobota*, 12 mai 2001 r.
69. Miner, Arena tot reburied in private service, May 10, 2001, A11; Joe Matyas, "City bids mystery tot final farewell," *LFP*, May 15, 2001, A1, A7; "Mayor's words honour Talbot child," *LFP*, May 15, 2001, A11; Hawkins and Mayer, "The Talbot Tot Being an Account of Professional and Social Responsibilities," *Arch Notes* (November/December 2001), 15.
70. Diary, *Poniedziałek*, 14 mai 2001 r.
71. Matyas, "City bids mystery tot final farewell," *LFP*, May 15, 2001, A1, A7; "Mayor's words honour Talbot child," *LFP*, May 15, 2001, A11; "A fitting farewell," *LFP*, May 15, 2001, A10.
72. Robert Ripley, "A farewell to London's Talbot Tot," *LFP*, May 19, 2001, F3.
73. Helen Connell, "Direct passion for tot to today's children," *LFP*, May 19, 2001, F3.
74. See the already noted Dan Brock, "Babies' Bones, Local Politics, and the Value of Archival Data" and "Pioneer Tots and Local Politics." The latter was published in *the Update*, vol. iv, no. 2 (Spring 2002) by the London and Western Ontario Branch, United Empire Loyalist's Association of Canada.
75. Hawkins and Mayer, "The Talbot Tot Being an Account of Professional and Social Responsibilities," *Arch Notes* (November/December 2001), 13. A copy of this article was in the file labelled "Talbot Tot" and had been given to Cindy Hartman, past president of this society, by Geoff Anderson.

76. Dan Brock, "The Talbot Tot," Michael Baker and Hilary Bates Neary, eds., *100 Fascinating Londoners* (2005: James Lorimer & Company Ltd.), 7
77. Hawkins and Mayer, "The Talbot Tot Being an Account of Professional and Social Responsibilities," *Arch Notes* (November/December 2001), 15. As a case in point, the only mention of the bones of "a very small infant" who "was buried in the cellar of whatever structure once occupied the site," sometime between 1800 and 1815 on what is now the northeast corner of Westdel Bourne and Commissioners Road West, is that which appeared in the *Free Press* on August 29, 2001. Peter Geigen-Miller, "Infant bones discovered in field," *LFP*, August 29, 2001, A1, A8. This was in fact, lot 50, concession A, Westminster Township, occupied by Joseph Kilburn, Sr. who crossed over from Delaware Township in December 1807.

## VICTORIA HOME FOR THE INCURABLES

Arthur M<sup>c</sup>Clelland

The Victoria Home for the Incurables, the only such home in Southwestern Ontario, traced its roots back to the Women's Christian Association (WCA) which held its first meeting on May 7, 1874 when a small group of women banded themselves together to form "a society whose chief concern was the distribution of charity for the relief of the poor and needy, housing of the friendless girl, care of her child and visiting the sick in the hospital."



On March 15, 1875, a charter was granted to the WCA and Ellen Harrison Gregston (1831-1923) was elected as its first president. The motto of the WCA is "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path, (Psalm 119:105). Ellen Gregston who lived at 429 Colborne Street, was widely known as the mother of the Busy Bees of the First Methodist Church, a unique children's organization which attracted wide attention throughout Canada. In 1876, Mrs. Gregston founded the first young people's organization in the former Queen's Avenue Methodist Church. It was originally a young ladies' mission band which met weekly to sew articles of clothing to be sold at a bazaar in aid of London's Protestant Orphans' Home at 386 Ridout Street. Mrs. Gregston was a staunch Methodist and gave a lifetime of service to her church. She was also a noted poet and several of her poems were brought to the attention of Queen Victoria. In September 1876, WCA purchased a cottage on Grey Street for

\$700 and opened the Women's Refuge and Children's Home "to afford a means of reformation for every fallen woman who seriously desired to amend her life." That same month on the 14<sup>th</sup>, Mrs. Gregston laid the cornerstone for the new Protestant Home for Orphans, the Aged and the Friendless on the southeast corner of Cheapside and Richmond streets. Residents were required to pay an entrance fee and to promise to stay in the home for one year during which time an endeavor was made to fit each one for a gainful situation, or at least with an improved religious and social background. Babies were taken in when deserted or orphaned. In 1880, 32 infants under the age of two were received. After two years on Grey Street, the property was exchanged for \$3,000 for a house at 190 St. James Street at the corner of St. George Street. The Women's Refuge and Children's Home remained here for the next 40 years from 1878 to 1918. In December 1919, the three-storey building at 190 St. James Street, some 200 yards from Huron College, was purchased from WCA for \$6,500 by the Western University of London. It was then known as "The Annex" and provided offices for the faculty supervisor of athletics and for the librarian, a library

workroom and stack space for the library which was moved from Huron College. The University occupied this site until 1924 and then it was vacant until 1928 when the present-day St. James Court Apartments were built on the site.



To separate the children and young women from the elderly women who needed more care, WCA purchased in February 1886 the property at 375 King Street where a Home for Aged Women was opened on April 29, 1886 with three residents. City indigents were received at \$5 a month. Mrs. Ann Tilt was the first matron, followed by Miss Jane Lawson (1888-1890) and Miss Eliza Ault (1891-1892). 375 King Street was demolished in 1983 and replaced with a parking lot.

Through a gift from Thomas M<sup>c</sup>Cormick (1830-1906), president of the M<sup>c</sup>Cormick Manufacturing Co., a new Aged People's Home (later the M<sup>c</sup>Cormick Home for the Aged) was opened in September 1892. Operated by the WCA, it was located on the northeast corner of Richmond and Victoria streets. The two previous homes run by the WCA, one for 16 women at 375 King Street and one for 13 men at 181 John Street, established in 1888, were sold. The money from these sales were used in May 1894 to rent a frame building at 577 Hamilton Road (southwest corner of Egerton Street) for \$10 a month.

This was the first location for the London Home for the Incurables, initially having only two patients but increasing to 16 by the end of 1894. 38-year-old Mary Ann Stoneman was the first

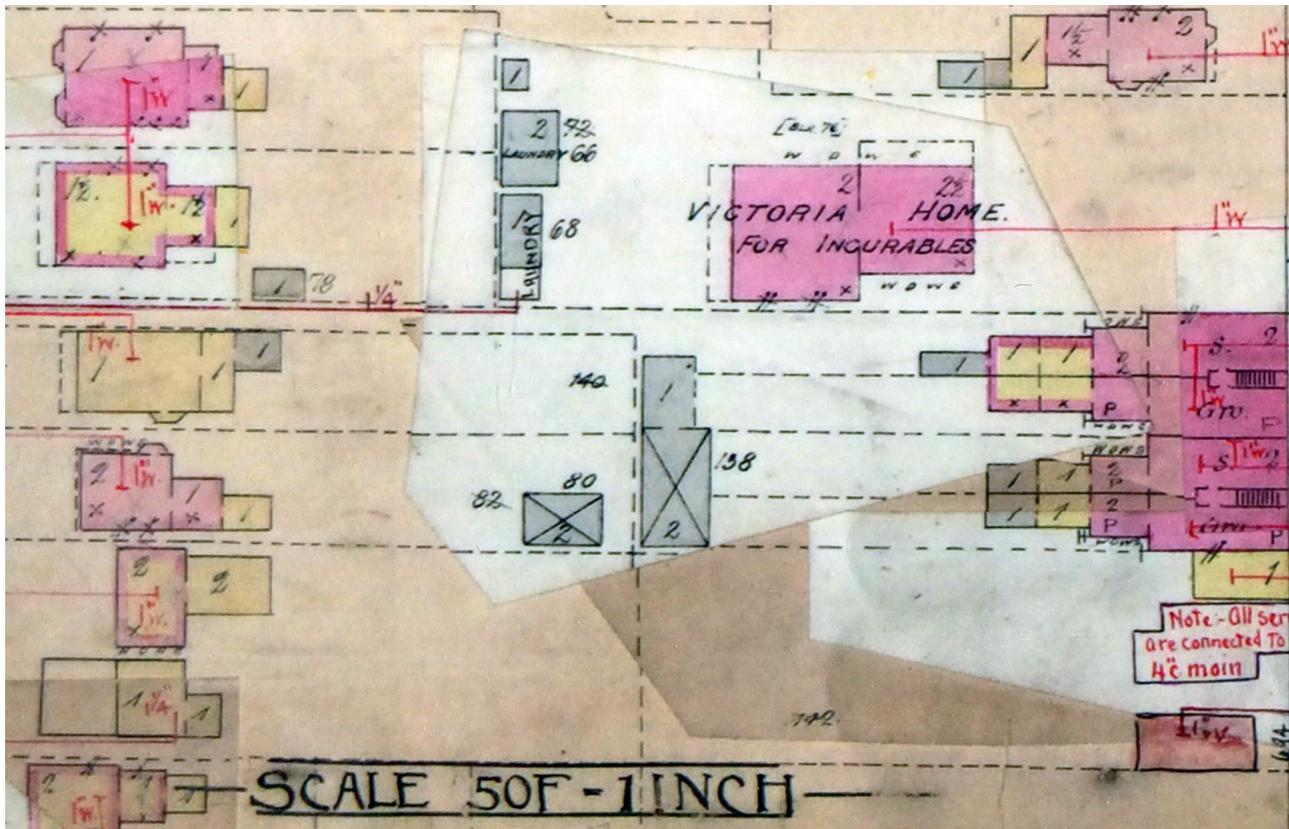
patient and she died from epilepsy at the home on April 24, 1899. Zephaniah Bullock was the first caretaker of the home, his wife Elizabeth, the first cook and their son, William, the first orderly. WCA members were not satisfied with the building or its location at the edge of the city's limits. Very soon, larger premises were needed for the home.

In March 1896, the WCA purchased a brick house, the former Salvation Army Industrial Home at 708 Dundas Street for \$3,500. The site had a 70-foot frontage on Dundas Street and a right of way to Queens Avenue. The building was able to accommodate 20 patients and was renamed the Jubilee Home for the Incurables after Queen Victoria's Jubilee of 60 years as queen. In 1898, the Home for the Incurables was considered "in as good repair as it is possible to have it without a thorough overhauling and expenditure of considerable money," (Johnson, p. 6). Lillian E. Blake was in charge of the home with Janet Barbara Groshaw (widow of Nicholas) as her assistant. Dr. James B. Campbell was the attending physician. Volunteers provided comforts, wrote letters and arranged musical treats for the patients. Religious services were arranged by the WCA and supplied by retired clergymen of various denominations and students of Huron College. In 1900, the London Free Press noted, "that the Home for the Incurables had doubled in size by a wing built forward to Dundas Street at a cost of \$4,000," to increase bed capacity to 45 and an electric light was installed." (Johnson, p. 10). A large two and a half storey front section was constructed and built onto an earlier home on the property. Janet Groshaw (1868-1960) became superintendent in 1901 and remained in the position until 1917. There were now 45 patients and Maud Walker was the assistant to the superintendent and Dr. Campbell was the attending physician. In 1901, a pipe was laid from the cistern to the laundry located in a separate building on the back of the property and posts were put in the back lawn for clotheslines. Sodding was done at the front of the property and a gravel driveway was laid.



Victoria Home for Incurables is pictured here in its second home at 703 Dundas Street, which opened in 1903.

In 1903, the home was renamed the Victoria Home for Incurables. A Free Press reporter in 1903 wrote, “Along the east and north sides of the house are spacious verandahs on both storeys. A broad lawn stretches from the front of the building to the line of the street, and on either side, are shady trees and plots of flowers while a well-laden grape-vine clings to the walls.” (Johnson, p. 20). There was occasional talk that the home should become a hospital.



In 1907, an iron fence was added to the property. Outside electric lights were installed at the front and back doors in 1908. Until 1912, there was a mortgage of \$1,600 owing on the home.

During the First World War when her youngest son, William Francis, was reported missing in action in April 1915, Janet Groshaw left her position as matron of the Victoria Home for the Incurables and went overseas with the Canadian Army Medical Corps to France to discover his fate. Maud Walker then became the acting matron of the home. William had died during the Battle of Ypres in Belgium on June 6, 1916. Janet was invalided out of the army in 1919 with tuberculosis and returned to London to recuperate at the Queen Alexandra Sanatorium in Byron. She later became the first female president of a soldier’s branch of the Canadian Legion of the British Empire Service League, Byron Branch 69.

On June 21, 1915, a building permit was issued to J.G. Dodd and Son to erect a one-storey brick addition to the Home for the Incurables valued at \$4,000 to accommodate the 45 patients. The addition was completed in 1916. According to the October 1915 WCA Annual Report, there were 40 patients in 1914, 28 new patients in 1915, 12 patients who died and 6 patients were discharged. In 1915, the Alexander Maclean home at 714 Dundas to the east was purchased for \$4,700 to meet the growing demand for chronic care. The fence between the two properties was removed, two bathrooms were installed and the house was wired with electricity. In 1917, there were 53 patients in the home and milk was supplied for six cents a quart. For the war effort, a young blind woman knitted 16 pairs of socks.

In May 1917, a letter from the new law firm of Fraser and Moore informed WCA of a bequest of \$4,000 from the Eliza Shore estate. The money was to be used for a future new Victoria Home for the Incurables. In the 1917 WCA annual report there was a hint of a new Victoria Home. In March 1918, Helen Elizabeth Ingram and Jennie Moore were appointed to interview the Chief Officer of Health, John W.S. McCullough, regarding increasing grants for the Victoria Home. As they were presenting their case, they were joined by Sir Adam Beck and London Mayor Charles Ross Somerville who ably supported them. In May 1918, a letter came from the government promising an increase in the grant. In 1918, there were 40 patients. A year later there were 68 patients, 12 had died and 6 were discharged, leaving 50 patients residing at the home.

In the February 1919 WCA minutes, there was the first mention of building a new Home for the Incurables. A meeting was held at City Hall on February 25, 1919 to consider building a new home for 100 patients at Victoria and Wellington streets with O. Roy Moore as the architect. Roy estimated that the building would cost \$156,000. The project was discarded by the city.

After inspecting several properties on the market, the WCA decided to interview the owner of one such property at 81 Grand Avenue. In February 1920, the WCA asked the city for a grant of \$75,000 and a letter was sent to the provincial government. Premier Ernest Charles Drury came to London on March 4, 1920 and met with the WCA committee.



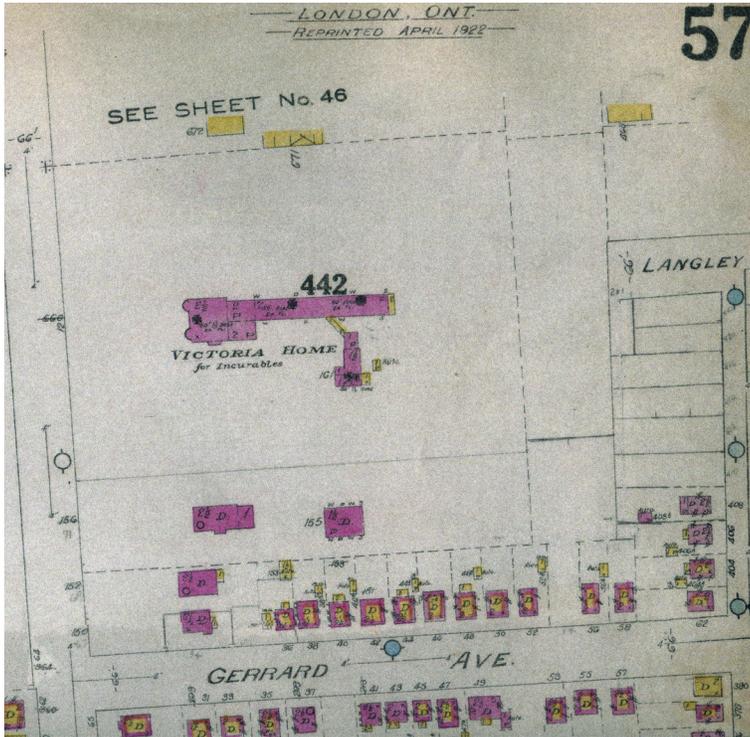


J. R. MINHINNICK,  
First Water Commissioner,  
1878.

The site now proposed for the new Victoria Home was Parkwood, the former residence of oil refiner and retired sea captain, John Rowe Minhinnick (1838-1906), at 81 Grand Avenue. In October 1920, the WCA paid \$27,500 for the property, a lower figure than what had been originally asked due to a generous donation from John Minhinnick's daughter, Gertrude. By November 1920, Mr. Roy A. Moore had his plans ready for the additions and renovation to the house. Hyatt Bros. were contracted to do the work for \$25,000. A large addition 170 X 32 feet was built at the rear of the building to house baths, lavatories, linen closets and wards for 70 patients and a staff of 21. An up-to-date kitchen was on the lower floor. The older building contained a board room, quarters for the superintendent and recreation hall. The partitions and stairs were fireproof. The heating plant was a no pressure vacuum system with an electric driven vacuum and boiler feed pumps, the first of its kind to be installed in London. At the May 1920 WCA meeting, Mrs. Alicia May Perrin donated \$100 for furnishing a room, thereby creating an honoured precedent. In October 1920, Miss Laura Griffin was named as superintendent at \$100 a month.

At 2 pm on July 5, 1921, the WCA opened its new fire-proof Victoria Home for the Incurables in Parkwood at a cost of about \$100,000. Hume Cronyn, MP and Dr. Hugh Stevenson, MPP were in attendance. The new building accommodated 125 patients in single and three-bed wards. The second floor had a large sunroom. Admission to the hospital required certificates from two practicing physicians regarding the incurable disease. The rates ranging from \$2.25 to \$5 a day included bed, board, laundry and nursing care with the service of the interns. Patients had to pay for special drugs and stimulants. Drugs were not allowed to be stored in the rooms. Patients could have their own physician at their personal expense. Any mental cases were referred to the London Asylum for the Insane. Patients could only bring one trunk of wearing apparel and this was subject to examination. All patients who were able were expected to attend church services on Sunday afternoons. By July 12, 1921, all 54 patients were moved into the new building.

The original owner, John Minhinnick, had planted rolling lawns around his square white-brick home with exotic shrubs and trees. A horse named Jennie and her successor, Joe, were acquired to help cultivate the five acres of extensive gardens.



In 1922, the Home received \$3,000 from the estate of George Priddis of Brook Farm. In 1923, the chickens which had been moved from the 708 Dundas Street property were sold. At its 50<sup>th</sup> annual meeting in October 1924, WCA reported that the gardens at the Victoria Home had yielded 87 bushels of potatoes as well as beets, cabbages and carrots. This was a record which was matched and exceeded in the next 30 years as more ground was acquired and cultivated at the back of the Home. To honour WCA's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, a brass tablet was installed in Victoria Home. In March 1925, tenders were called for an extension to Victoria Home. Roy Moore estimated the costs at \$42,500. The contract was awarded to the Hyatt Bros. and construction began in April 1925.

In 1927, the Victoria Home for the Incurables was renamed, the Parkwood Hospital for the Incurables. In 1929, several additions were made to Parkwood. Construction included a cottage for the engineer, an up-to-date laundry and a new heating plant which more than doubled the capacity of the old boiler. Included was a tunnel which was considered a great convenience at the time, connecting the engineer's cottage with the furnace room and main building. A diet kitchen was

Register No. ....

**Parkwood Hospital**  
FOR INCURABLES  
LONDON, ONTARIO, CANADA

Application of .....

For Admission to the Hospital

Application Received .....

Patient Admitted .....

**PARKWOOD HOSPITAL FOR INCURABLES**  
LONDON, ONTARIO, CANADA  
**Form of Application for Admission**

- Name and Address of Applicant in full .....
- Immediate relatives, with addresses (state relationship) .....
- What are their financial circumstances? .....
- Names and Addresses of friends .....
- Has applicant any money or property?  
(Details of assets and liabilities ordered on back of application by individual responsible for payments) .....
- Place of birth .....
- Give other residences during past year, with dates and duration of each .....
- Date of birth? .....
- Religion what denomination? .....
- What nationality? .....
- Name and nature of disease? .....
- Length of time under treatment? .....
- Where and by whom treated? .....
- Has the applicant ever lived or been treated in any institution? If so, where? .....
- In case of illness or death, who should be notified and what is their address and telephone number? .....
- In case of death, what arrangements for burial have, or will be, made, and in what plot and cemetery will interment be made? .....
- Name of attending clergyman .....
- Signature of applicant .....

We, the undersigned, hereby recommend the above named applicant as a fit and proper person to be admitted as a patient to Parkwood Hospital for Incurables, and believe that the statements above set forth are true.

added as well as three bedrooms for orderlies and a dining room for employees, a double garage and a root cellar. In June 1933, a contract of \$90,000 was awarded to the Hyatt Bros. to construct an eastern wing to accommodate 60 more patients. Rooms were then furnished at an estimated \$96 per room and a new kitchen was installed. In the midst of the Great Depression, the new wing opened on March 28, 1934 and the opening was one of the most lavish ceremonies hosted by WCA. A formal tea was held accompanied by Byfield's three-piece orchestra. In attendance were Mayor George Wenige and the speaker was Provincial Minister of Health, Dr. John Morrow Robb (1876-1942).

As part of WCA's 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary, an occupational therapy programme began at Parkwood in July 1935 with Florence Fraser as the first therapist. At the July 1935 WCA board meeting, Mrs. Max Lerner urged the board to consider building a nurse's residence at Parkwood to make more rooms available for patients. In November 1935, a library was organized and distribution of books and magazines to patients began. The oldest patient was Letitia Morgan, 106 years old. Gertrude Buttery and Coral Manning were appointed as librarians. Late in 1937, the first plans for the nurses' residence were ready. In 1938, Miss Lillian Uren, superintendent at Parkwood Hospital since 1927, retired and was given a bouquet of flowers and a floor lamp by the patients. A strip of land to the east of the hospital was purchased in 1939. Mr. Roy Moore was the architect and tenders for \$78,666.40 were opened for the cost of the building. The contract was awarded to the Putherbough Construction Company and the new nurses' residence opened on March 15, 1939. WCA's 1939 annual meeting was held on March 22 at Parkwood to display the new nurses' residence. In March 1946, Margaret Wilson was appointed as the first administrator of the hospital whose duties included the charge of the building and its contents, engineering, garden, laundry and all employees except the nursing staff and orderlies. Her annual salary was \$1,800. The gardens continued to produce prolifically. Enough potatoes were grown for the consumption of the hospital's patients. Bushels of green beans were canned and 60 bushels of parsnips and 600 heads of cabbage were stored in the root cellar.

It was proposed in 1947 that the front of the old building be demolished and that a new front and west wing be built. When construction began, a one-floor auditorium wing with a basement would be built, joining the east wing and nurses' residence. In November 1947, it was decided to postpone the construction. In the spring of 1950, a construction contract of \$68,000 was awarded to the Putherbough Construction Company and construction began. During the summer of 1951, Putherbough received the contract for the new front and the west wing. The original building was demolished in 1952 and the new \$533,000 building was completed in 1953. 500 invitations were sent out for the official opening. It was a three-storey rectangular building, measuring 192 feet X 40 feet. The hospital was administered by a staff of 125 people for 195 patients. In December 1954, a part-time physiotherapist was appointed.



In 1957, WCA was worried that Parkwood Hospital would be closed unless there was more financial assistance from the city of London as two-thirds of the hospital's 200 patients were indigent.

In 1959, Frederick S. Woodcock became the first male superintendent for Parkwood Hospital. Two auxiliary services began in 1960 - the hairdressing salon and the tuck shop. On March 8, 1960, 96-year-old Ellen Alton, was the first customer of the hairdressing salon donated by the Soroptimist Club of London. In 1961, with new regulations from the Ontario Hospital Services Commission, Parkwood Hospital, which once admitted many elderly persons who required only custodial care, was now restricted to the care of the chronically ill. A service auxiliary was formed in 1962 by WCA to assist and entertain patients. Most of the auxiliary volunteers were members of the Friendship Group of the Women's Missionary Society at Calvary United Church. In 1963, the Parkwood Hospital Auxiliary was organized. In 1964, Parkwood Hospital for the Incurables was named Parkwood Hospital for the Chronically Ill. In March 1978, Parkwood began a day hospital service. In 1980, Parkwood Hospital accepted the responsibility for the care of veterans. Plans for a new Parkwood Hospital were accepted by the Ministry of Health in 1981 with a contract of \$35,549,500 awarded in 1982 to Ellis-Don Ltd. The architects were Tillman Ruth. On December 5, 1984, Parkwood Hospital moved from its home at 81 Grand Avenue to a new debt-free facility on Wellington Road near Commissioners Road.

After 123 years of managing a chronic care facility, WCA (now known as the M<sup>c</sup>Cormick Care Group), the oldest women's group in London, was ordered by the Health Services Restructuring Commission to relinquish the control, management, operation and ownership of Parkwood Hospital on Wednesday June 18, 1997 to St. Joseph's Health Care, effective August 31, 1997.

## APPENDIX A

### LONDON HOME FOR THE INCURABLES: ADDRESSES, NAMES, SUPERINTENDENTS (*unless otherwise noted*)

- 1894: London Home for the Incurables, 577 Hamilton Road, Zephaniah Bullock, first caretaker
- 1895: London Home for the Incurables, 577 Hamilton Road, Susan B. Robertson
- 1896: London Home for the Incurables, 708 Dundas Street, Susan Dyke
- 1897-1900: Jubilee Home for the Incurables, 708 Dundas Street Lillian E. Blake
- 1901-1902: Jubilee Home for the Incurables, 708 Dundas Street, Janet B. Groshaw (widow of Nicholas)
- 1903-1917: Victoria Home for the Incurables, 708 Dundas Street, Janet B. Groshaw (widow of Nicholas)
- 1918-1919: Victoria Home for the Incurables, 708 Dundas Street, Maud Walker
- 1920: Victoria Home for the Incurables, 708 Dundas Street, Mrs. S.A. Price
- 1921-1922: Victoria Home for the Incurables, 708 Dundas Street, Alma R. Thompson
- 1923: Victoria Home for the Incurables, 81 Grand Avenue, Laura Griffin
- 1924-1927: Victoria Home for the Incurables, 81 Grand Avenue, Laura Griffin, matron
- 1928-1939: Parkwood Hospital for the Incurables, 81 Grand Avenue, Lillian Uren
- 1940-1947: Parkwood Hospital for the Incurables, 81 Grand Avenue, Millie Turner
- 1948-1956: Parkwood Hospital for the Incurables, 81 Grand Avenue, Margaret Wilson
- 1957-1959: Parkwood Hospital for the Incurables, 81 Grand Avenue, Gertrude Bundy
- 1960-1963: Parkwood Hospital for the Incurables, 81 Grand Avenue, Frederick S. Woodcock
- 1964-1966: Parkwood Hospital for the Chronically Ill, 81 Grand Avenue, Frederick S. Woodcock
- 1967-1984: Parkwood Hospital for the Chronically Ill, 81 Grand Avenue, Arthur J. Hobbins, executive director

## APPENDIX B: 577 HAMILTON ROAD HISTORY

The location of 577 Hamilton Road was first listed in the Cherrier & Kirwin's London Directory for 1872-73 in the London Alphabetical Directory as "Shain, Hiram, tavernkeeper, Hamilton Road, south side, between tollgate and Adelaide." By 1874, Hiram was listed as the proprietor of the Eastern Hotel, corner of Gore and Hamilton Road. Hiram Shain (1839-1925) later had a hotel in Pottersburg (later known as London Junction) from 1897 to 1903. In 1883, Eastern Hotel was listed at its first street address, 357 Hamilton Road with a new owner, James Dailey. After

the annexation of London East on August 20, 1885 by the city of London, many London East street names were changed and street address numbers were changed. Thus 357 Hamilton Road became 577 Hamilton Road and remained a hotel until 1891. It was vacant for two years until it became the London Home for the Incurables in 1894 until 1896. In 1896, Charles Summers opened a grocery store at 577 Hamilton Road. He sold the store in 1910. 577 Hamilton Road was the Swingway Snack Bar from 1941 to 1946 and then a Dominion Foods Grocery Store from 1951 to 1977, then the Forest City Market, an Asian market from 1978 to 1991, Asia Food Mart, 1997-2009, Asia Chinese Food Mart, 2010-2013 and is now Payless Afro International Food Market

## **CITY DIRECTORY LISTINGS FOR 577 HAMILTON ROAD**

(last city directory published is for 2013)

- 1872-73: Shain, Hiram, tavernkeeper, Hamilton Road, south side, between tollgate and Adelaide
- 1874-1882: Shain (Shane), Hiram, proprietor of the Eastern Hotel, south side of Hamilton Road, west of Egerton Street, corner of Trafalgar Street, London East
- 1883-1884: Eastern Hotel, first street address, 357 Hamilton Road with a new owner, James Dailey
- Aug 20, 1885: City of London annexes London East and many London East street names were changed and street address numbers were changed. Thus 357 Hamilton Road became 577 Hamilton Road
- 1886: Dailey, James, hotel, 577 Hamilton Road
- 1887: Graham, George, hotel
- 1888: Nelles, Charles M., hotel
- 1890-1891: Barrell, Edwin, hotel
- 1892-1893: vacant
- 1894-1896: London Home for the Incurables
- 1897- 1911: Charles W. Summers, grocer and Ealing Post Office
- 1912: William A. Bailey, grocer and Ealing Post Office
- 1913: Dalgiesh & Co (William J.), grocer and Ealing Post Office
- 1914-1915: John Fairbairn, grocer and Ealing Post Office
- 1916-1917: Summers (Charles) and Brittain (Horace), grocers and Ealing Post Office
- 1918-1920: C.W. Summers (Charles) & Sons, grocers
- 1921-1925: Royal Bank of Canada
- 1926-1927: vacant
- 1928-1932: W.A. Bailey and Son (William A. and William F.) , grocers

1933: David Said, grocer  
1934-1936: vacant  
1937-1939: residential tenants  
1940: Hamilton and Porter Restaurant  
1941-1948: Swingway Snack Bar, Nellie Porter  
1949-1950: vacant  
1951-1977: Dominion Foods Grocery Store  
1978-1991: Forest City Market  
1992-1994: Field Fare Co-op  
1995: vacant  
1996: Asia Chinese Food Supply  
1997-2009: Asia Food Mart  
2010-2013: Asia Chinese Food Mart  
2022: Payless Afro International Food Market

## APPENDIX C – 708 DUNDAS STREET – HISTORY



The first occupant of 708 Dundas Street (originally 96 Dundas Street) was Rev. Joseph Hiram Robinson (1807-1896). The location of 708 Dundas Street was first listed in the McAlpine's London City and County of Middlesex Directory for 1875 in the London City Directory as "Robinson, Rev. Joseph, Methodist Church of Canada, boards Dundas, between Elizabeth and English." Joseph Hiram Robinson was born on December 20, 1807 and at the age of 23, he was received on probation in 1830 by the Sheffield Conference of the Methodist New Connexion in England. He was married to Jane Scholey on March 6, 1832 in Adlingtonfleet, York, England and was ordained three years later in 1835. From 1830 to 1850, he was appointed to various Methodist circuits in England. In 1851 he was appointed Superintendent of the New Connexion Missions in Canada which office he filled for 15 years. In 1866, he resigned and returned to England to edit various New Connexion magazines which he had done since 1854, having established the *Evangelical Witness* that year. In 1874, he left his editorial position and was sent for a second time to Canada to investigate a possible union between the New Connexion and Wesleyan Methodists. The vote in 1874 was in favour of the union and Rev. Robinson was put out of a job. He remained in Canada and joined the Methodist Church of Canada and was received into the ranks of its ministers of the London Conference at the General Conference held in Brantford in 1875. Rev.

Robinson lived at 100 Dundas Street from 1875 until 1886. Rev. Robinson was superannuated (retired) in 1881. He died at his son's home in Ottawa on April 14, 1896 at the age of 89 and was buried in Mount Pleasant Cemetery in London. The Methodist Church, Canada merged with the Congregational Union of Ontario and Quebec and 70% of the Presbyterian Church in Canada on June 10, 1925 to form the United Church of Canada.

After the annexation of London East on August 20, 1885 by the city of London, many London East street names were changed and street address numbers were changed. Thus 100 Dundas Street became 708 Dundas Street.

**Chronic Female Diseases & Lung Trouble**  
—SUCCESSFULLY TREATED AT THE—  
**LADIES' SANITARIUM,**  
—708 Dundas Street.—  
A full staff of experienced nurses in attendance. Terms Liberal.  
MRS. JULIA PAYNE, Proprietress.

Produce Dealers	
Clarke James, 10 Covent Garden Mkt basement	Hodgson Bros, Market Lane
Higgins Benjamin, 19 Covent Garden Mkt basement	McCormick Wm, 11 Covent Garden Mkt basement
25	McDowell George, 16-20 Covent Garden Mkt basement

In 1894, Mrs. Julia Payne, who died in 1909, was the proprietress of a Ladies' Sanitarium located at 708 Dundas Street where chronic female diseases and lung trouble were successfully treated with a full staff of experienced nurses in attendance and with liberal terms. It was a short-lived enterprise. In 1895, the Salvation Army Industrial Home occupied the site with Ensign Lizzie Ward as the matron.

The Victoria Home for the Incurables occupied 708 Dundas Street from 1896 to 1921. In July 1928, 708 Dundas was sold to George Wyatt for \$10,000 and demolished to make room for the 350-seat Palace Theatre for talkies which opened on March 11, 1929 with the first film being Synthetic Sin starring Colleen Moore. This was London's second neighbourhood theatre built by the Hyatt Bros. In 1948 it was sold to Famous Players Canada Ltd., renovated and reopened as the Park Theatre on June 7, 1951. In 1966 it became the fourth Cinerama theatre in Canada. It closed on September 1, 1989 and was purchased by the London Community Players on November 17, 1990 for \$550,000. When the new orchestra pit at the Palace was excavated, the foundation walls and basement floor of the original Jubilee Home for the Incurables were discovered, just a few feet below the auditorium floor. The London Community Players reopened the theatre as the live Palace Theatre on July 17, 1991.

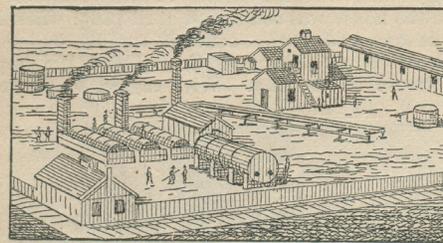
## APPENDIX D - 714 DUNDAS STREET

The location of 714 Dundas Street was first listed in Polk's London City Directory for 1878-79 in the alphabetical list of names as "Frank Cooper, photographer, residence, north side Dundas, east of Elizabeth, London East." Frank resided at 714 Dundas Street from 1878 to 1898. The street address was originally 106 Dundas Street. After the annexation of London East on August 20, 1885 by the city of London, many London East street names were changed and street address numbers were changed. Thus 106 Dundas Street became 714 Dundas Street. From 1899 to 1914, Alexander Maclean, an engineer with McClary Manufacturing Company, lived at 714 Dundas Street which is still existing as a residence today.

## APPENDIX E – 81 GRAND AVENUE

81 Grand Avenue had been the home of John Rowe Minhinnick (1838-1906). As a young man, John was a tinsmith and moved to Hamilton where he had his own business for ten years until he moved to London. He opened a hardware store and continued in that business until the discovery of oil in Petrolia attracted him. He eventually opened the Empire Oil Company and Star Oil Refinery on Hamilton Road in London. By 1877 there were 17 refineries in the Hamilton Road area and thirteen of those plants went up in smoke. The London Advertiser in its March 9<sup>th</sup>, 1881 issue reported that "the condition of Bathurst Street east of Adelaide Street was a disgrace to the village of London East. Owing to sewers being stopped up, the street is literally covered with the oil." Increasing demand for lubricating oil for machinery, rapid changes in the process of refining oil, lack of regulations and competition from the United States led to the merger of the small refineries in London East like those owned by John Minhinnick. In 1876, several manufacturers joined forces to create the London Oil Refining Company, hoping this would ensure their survival. On September 8, 1880, fearing they would be crushed by the American oil giant, Standard Oil controlled by John D. Rockefeller, owners of 16 refineries including Minhinnick, contributed \$25,000 each to form the Imperial Oil Company. After a bolt of lightning struck the Imperial Oil Company refinery in London East on July 10, 1883 and destroyed it, the directors decided to move their business to Lambton County. John Minhinnick spent the rest of his life in the oil business. He also was associated with establishing the Empire Brass Company and was a member of the board of directors for the Carling Brewery Company and the Board of Water Commissioners, the forerunner of the Public Utilities Commission. The site at 81 Grand Avenue is now occupied by the Grand Wood Park Retirement Residence.

**The Empire Oil Co.,** London, Messrs. J. R. Minhinnick & H. Frasch.—The discovery of petroleum could not fail to develop material interests in a city like London, and in this connection an important establishment is that of the Empire Oil Company, whose products are so favorably known throughout this Province. This Company has for a number of



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### **Sources of Images**

Image One: “Mrs. E. H. Gregston, First President” (Local Council of Women, London, 1893 - 1937, p. 49)

Image Two: “375 King Street,” (London Demolished Buildings File)

Image Three: “Victoria Home for the Incurables, 708 Dundas Street, 1903” (From the Vault, Volume 1, p. 133)

Image Four: “Victoria Home for the Incurables, 708 Dundas Street, 1907” (Fire Insurance Plan, 1907. Sheet No. 20)

Image Five: “Parkwood, 31 Grand Avenue, 1900” (Illustrated London, 1900, p. 159)

Image Six: “J. R. Minhinnick, First Water Commissioner, 1878” (Illustrated London, 1900, p. 116)

Image Seven: “Victoria Home for the Incurables, 1921” (Vintage London website - London Free Press, July 5, 1921, p. 1)

- Image Eight: “Victoria Home for the Incurable, 81 Grand Avenue, 1922” (London Fire Insurance Plan, Sheet No. 57)
- Image Nine: “Parkwood Hospital Application, Part One” (London Room Archives Box #33)
- Image Ten: “Parkwood Hospital Application, Part Two” (London Room Archives Box #33)
- Image Eleven: “Parkwood Hospital, 81 Grand Avenue, March 1957” (From the Vault, Volume 2, p. 138)
- Image Twelve: “Rev. Joseph Hiram Robinson, 1807 - 1896” (Directory of Canadian Biography website)
- Image Thirteen: “Ladies Sanitarium, 708 Dundas Street” (Might’s City Directory, 1894, p. 381)
- Image Fourteen: “The Empire Oil Co.” (Industries of Canada, 1890, p. 90)

## Guidelines for Authors

The *Historian* welcomes manuscript submission on all aspects of the history of London and Middlesex County, independent of period, including articles on historic neighbourhoods.

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N6A 4W1

Manuscripts should be approximately 2,000 to 4,000 words, double-spaced and submitted electronically as Word documents or pdf files. Longer articles can be accepted but must be vetted before submission. Images should be submitted as separate jpg files in addition to being embedded in the file.

Please include a cover letter with your submission, stating:

- a) that the manuscript is not under current consideration by another journal;
- b) that all co-authors have read and approved of the submission;
- c) that permission for use of all images has been obtained.

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