

The London and Middlesex

HISTORIAN



Autumn 2013

Official journal of
The London and Middlesex
Historical Society

Volume 22



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 the research, discussion, presentation and publication of local history topics. The Society is affiliated with the Ontario Historical Society and also works with other community culture 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

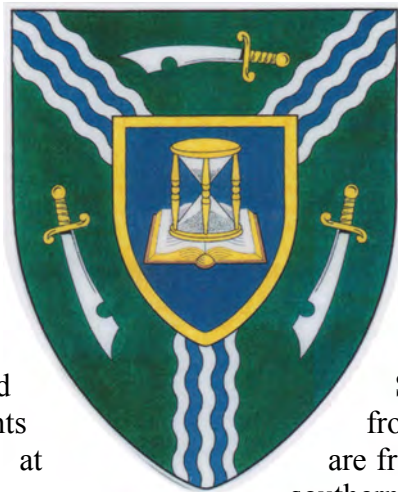
provides support and encouragement of historical research and the preservation of materials and memorabilia, relating to the heritage of the region. Working with community partners, the Society encourages the identification and preservation of historically, architecturally and archaeologically valuable 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 back-ground colour of the outer shield is green, and inspired by the county's forests and farms. The wavy Y-shaped device, a pall or shakefork represents the forks of the Thames River at 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 for history. Contrary to popular belief, the seaxes (or 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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Cover image: North Branch of the River Thames, London (Ontario), 1842.
James Hamilton (Canadian, 1810-1896), Courtesy of Toronto Public Library

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Editorial

Following a hiatus of nearly 19 years, the London and Middlesex Historical Society is very pleased to announce that the Society will once again issue its official journal, the *London and Middlesex Historian*. The first volume in the series was launched over 100 years ago in 1902. At the time the journal was known as *Transactions*. With the exception of several years during the 1920s and 1930s, it continued to appear on a regular basis until 1937. It then reappeared in 1967 for one year, and again in 1990, but this time for five years under the current name.

Throughout this period it has always served as an important vehicle for transmitting information on a variety of matters pertaining to the history of London and the surrounding area. Since the last issue in the series was published in 1994/1995, and was referred to as Volume 21, the current issue is Volume 22. It is our hope that we will be able to continue to produce this wonderful journal without interruption for many years to come.

This issue of the *Historian* covers intriguing aspects of our local history, providing deeper insight into the people and events that shaped the local community. Whether by the very streets and homes of an historic neighbourhood, public spaces used for recreational sports of the time, cemeteries full of mystery or the site of exploration along the Thames River, we can still see remnants of our history in the community today.

The first article by Marvin Simner focuses on one portion of an Old South area in London. The article offers an example of how, over time, what was originally Native property was purchased by the Crown and then subdivided through the efforts of early 19th century land speculators. The property then became farm land, streets, and finally a thriving urban community that eventually became part of the city of London. I always find it interesting to know how the areas in which we now live emerged and how the land was used long before

the areas became the neighbourhood centres that we are all familiar with today.

Catherine McEwen takes us on a ride to the time when residents of London and Middlesex County sought thrills and excitement in the dead of winter. The building of just a few toboggan runs appears to have promoted a winter sporting industry nearly overnight in the mid-to-late 1800s. The community's serious dedication to having fun and the subsequent opportunities created by the sport is made obvious by the fervor in which this craze seems to have spread.

The Brick Street Cemetery is closely examined in the detailed third article by Glen Curnoe. Combining the history of the location itself as well as a study of unmarked and refurbished gravestones and motifs found on the markers, Curnoe brings the cemetery to life using the personal stories of those connected with the deceased as well as those interred within its grounds.

In the last article in this issue we return to London's formative days when John Graves Simcoe considered the forks of the Thames as the proper location for the capital of Upper Canada. While circumstances proved to favour another city, Simcoe designated this region as a key defensive location in the event of an American attack. The manner in which Simcoe explored the area, however becomes a topic for debate in Marvin Simner's thought provoking revisionist history of Simcoe's visit to the forks.

In editing this volume, I feel extremely fortunate to have worked with such dedicated and thorough historians as Marvin, Catherine and Glen. I would also like to thank the following individuals for providing valuable editorial comments on the articles before they went to press: Fred Armstrong, Dan Brock, Janet Hunten, Don Menard, and Catherine McEwen.

Roxanne Lutz
Editor

Announcing a New Series of Articles for the Historian

The London and Middlesex Historical Society is interested in promoting greater public awareness of historical buildings, people, and events in local communities throughout London and Middlesex County. It is our hope that if residents are made aware of the historical significance of their surroundings, such an awareness will lead to greater public appreciation and support for the preservation of the many heritage sites that exist in the city and the surrounding area.

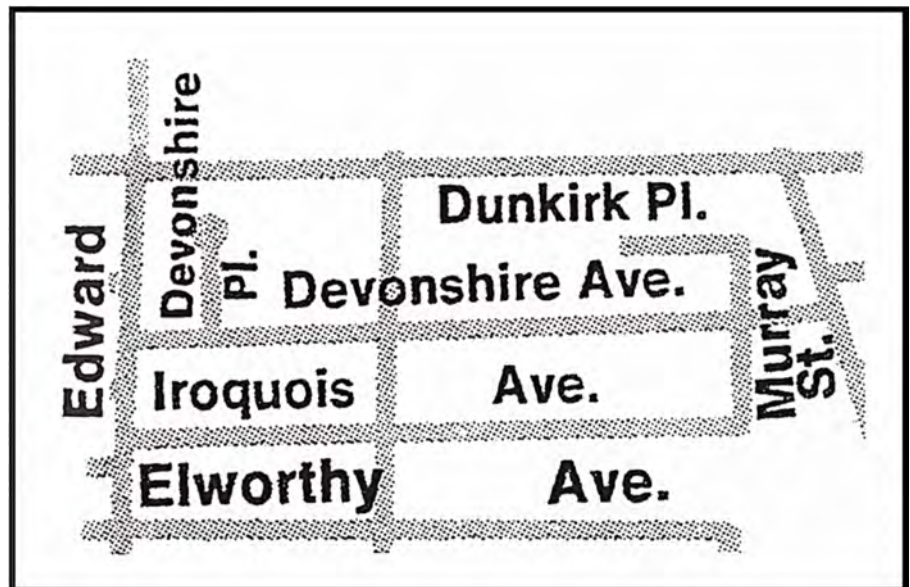
With this goal in mind, the Society wishes to encourage, not only its members, but other local residents to submit articles to the *Historian* dealing with their local neighbourhoods.

Our plan is to launch an ongoing series entitled *Our Neighbourhoods* that will focus on the historical significance of communities throughout the city and the county. We are interested in receiving material on significant historical events, important people and buildings of the past, as well as information on the origin of the neighbourhoods themselves. If you ever wondered about the history of the area in which you reside, please let us know and we will be happy to help you with advice on how to gather the necessary information. The following article is an example of the overall neighbourhood information that we look forward to publishing.

The Unfolding Story of One Old South Neighbourhood

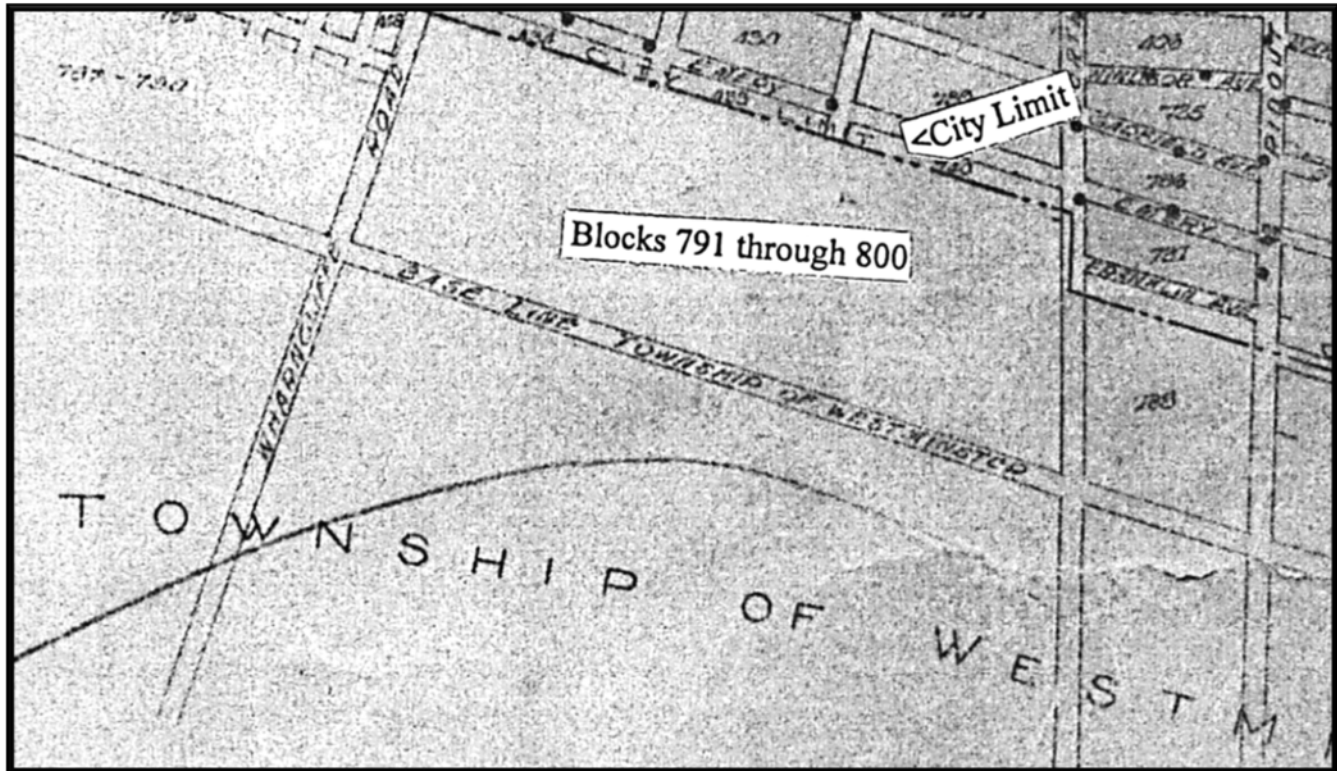
Marvin L. Simner

The six blocks bounded on the north by Dunkirk Place, on the south by Elworthy Avenue, on the west by Edward Street and on the east by Murray Street is one of the last neighbourhoods to be incorporated into the Old South area of London. This area became part of the city on July 1, 1961, when the city annexed approximately 60,000 acres in London and Westminster Townships.



Until then this neighbourhood was part of Blocks 791 through 800 which were outside of the city limits in Westminster Township, as shown on the 1922 map reproduced below (unless otherwise noted all of the maps in this article were reproduced with permission from the Western University Map and Data Centre).

The purpose of this article is to outline the evolution of this area from the time it became Crown Land in the late 1700s, until the early 1960s when it became part of London.



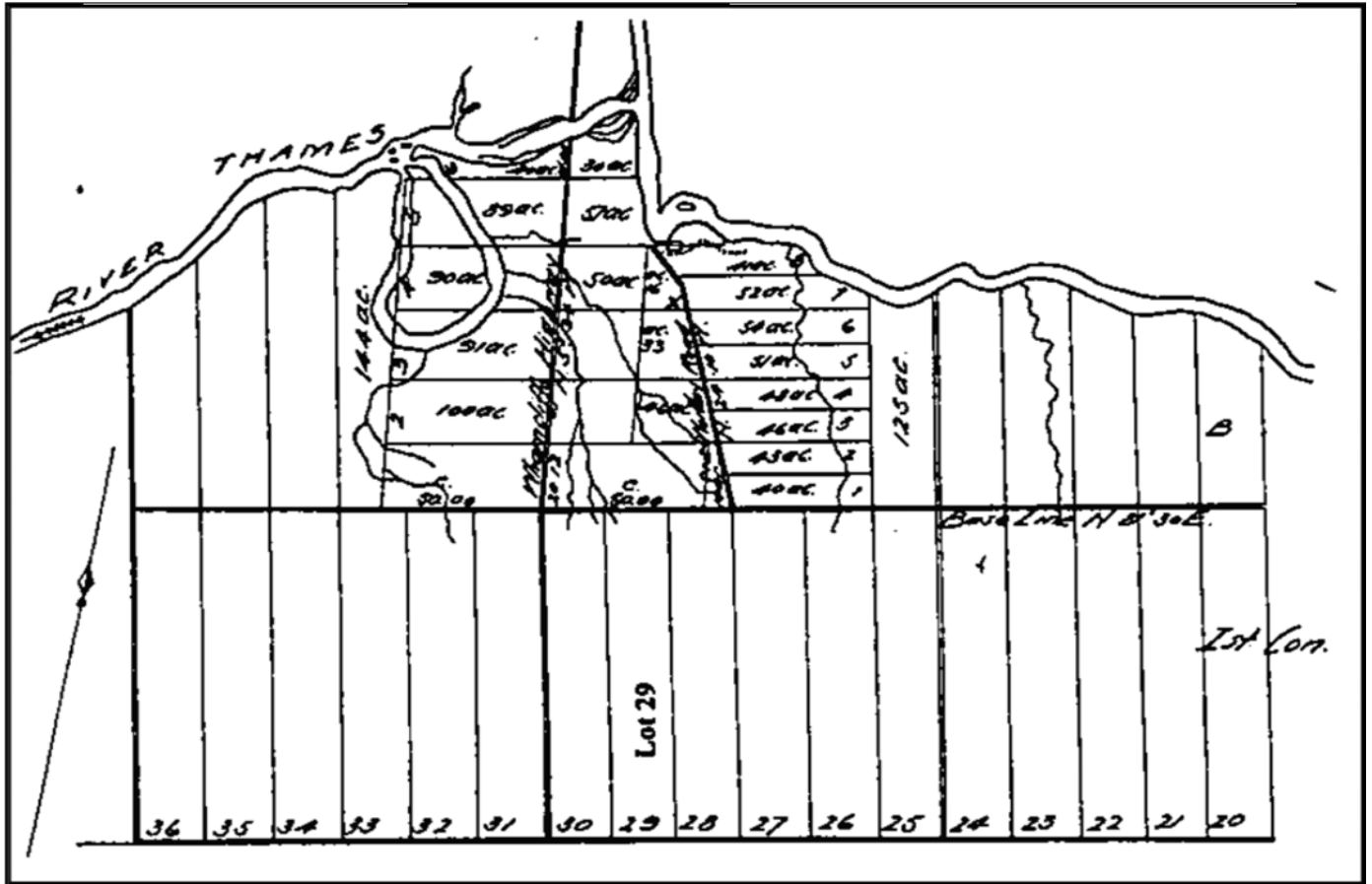
Pre-Annexation History

Following the American War of Independence (1775-1783), Britain was very concerned over the possibility that it might lose further territory above Lake Erie as the result of an invasion from the United States (Armstrong, 1986). To guard against this possibility, and to maintain favour with the Native tribes who resided in this area, the Crown negotiated a series of major treaties, collectively known as

Land Surrenders. Surrender #2, signed on June 22nd, 1790, by the chiefs of the Ottawa, Chip-pawa, Pottowatomy and Huron Nations, granted the Crown possession of all the land, with the exception of certain reserves, that extended roughly from Lake Erie in the south, to the Thames River in the north, and from Lake St. Clair (Windsor) in the west, to a line somewhat east of present day London (Jacobs, 1983).

It was within this extremely large tract of land that what is known today as Old South emerged,

carved in part from Lot 29 shown below on the 1830 map of what became London.



Early Neighbourhood History

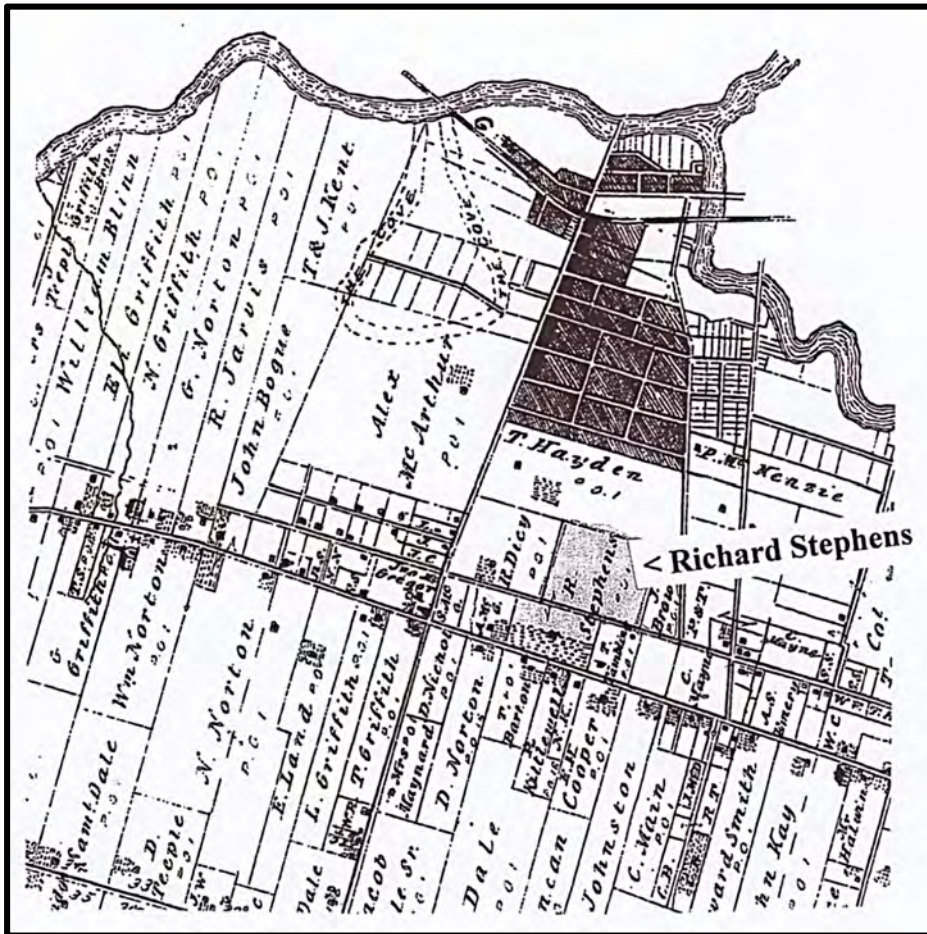
Many of the parcels within this lot changed hands a number of times over the years due largely to land speculators who settled the region. For example, the first land owner, John Davy, purchased 100 acres from the Crown on February 16, 1819. Approximately 11 months later he sold a portion of this property to Thomas Duncome. Three months after that he sold a second portion to George Norton, and four months later 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. Thus, in less than seven years, and contrary to the Crown's admonition against land speculation (see Simner, 2010, p. 18, for a brief discussion of this point), portions of Lot 29 changed hands at least five times. In fact, within the first 40 years of the existence of Lot 29, this property was sold a total of 29 times! The rapid turnover of land solely for the sake of profit is certainly not a recent phenomenon.

John Stephens subsequently purchased 80 acres of Lot 29 together with some ad-

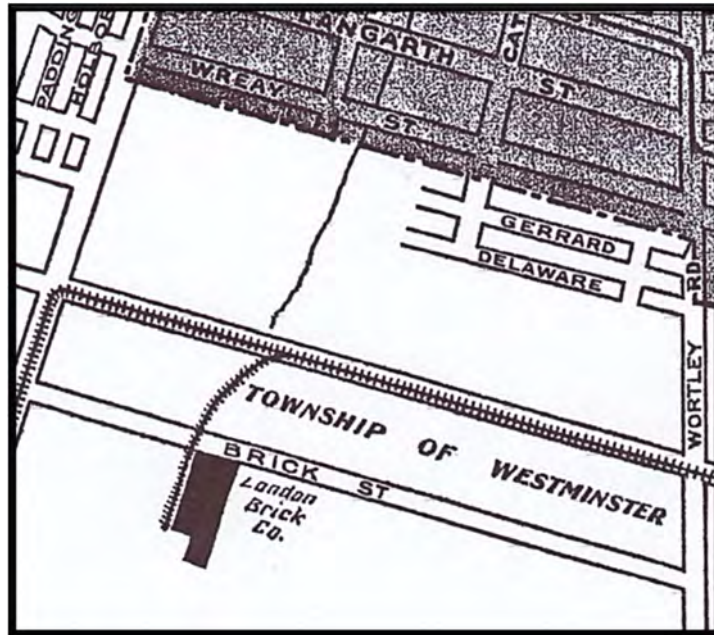
ditional property in Westminster Township north of Base Line Road that eventually became Old South, culminating at Commissioners Road. Stephens was from Warwickshire, England. He served as a midshipman for a number of years in the British navy, was promoted to captain, came to Middlesex County along with his wife Ann in 1820, and settled in Westminster Township.

The portion of his property that eventually became the neighbourhood under consideration was known originally as the Richmond Hill Farm. Following the death of John Stephens, this area was taken over by his son, Richard (1817-1903), whose name appears on the 1878 map reproduced below.



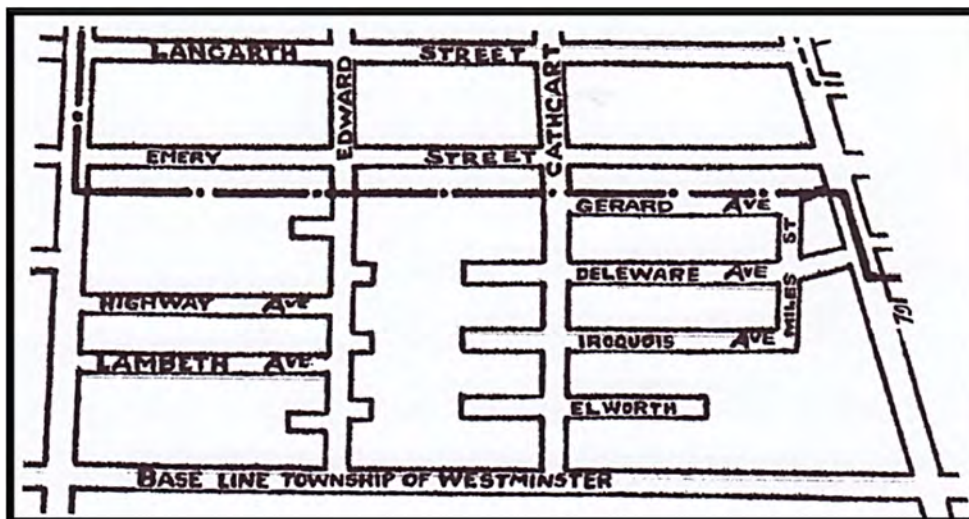
Richard's son Roland (1851-1927) remained on the farm after his father's death. During Richard's time the farm house, surrounded by a large orchard, was located between Baseline Road and Commissioners Road. Apparently, it was during Roland's tenure that the property north of Baseline was

sold and divided into streets and then into individual building lots. The first two streets to be surveyed were Gerrard (now Dunkirk Place) and Delaware (now Devonshire Avenue). As shown below on the 1914 map, initially access to both was via Cathcart since neither street reached Wortley.



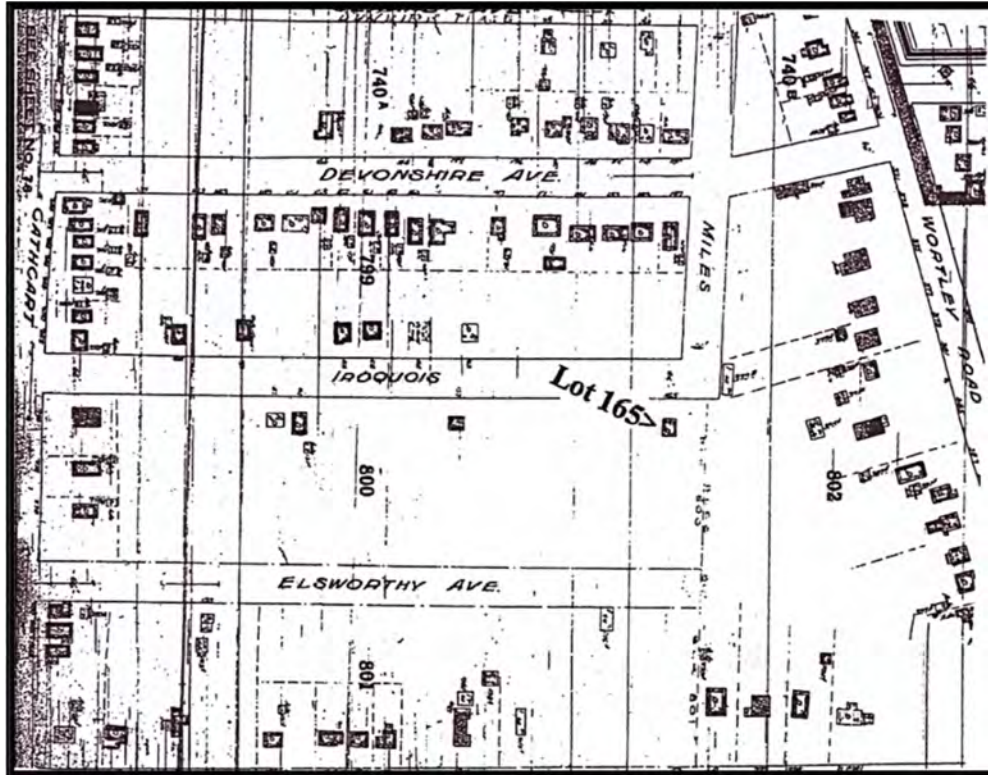
The two remaining streets (Iroquois and Elworthy) along with Murray (previously known as Miles), that now comprise the neighborhood were not completed until sometime within the next 10-15 years. It was not until the mid-to-late 1930s, however, that Devonshire

(Delaware), Iroquois and Elworthy (spelled Elworth on the 1934 map reproduced below) were extended to meet Edward. Instead, the layout of all three streets stopped approximately midway between Cathcart and Edward.



Home construction in the neighbourhood began around the turn of the 20th century. One of the earliest houses to be erected was

on lot 165 at the corner of Iroquois and Murray (referred to as Miles on the 1940 map reproduced below).



This property was purchased in 1907 by Fred Dicks, a florist and resident of Westminster Township, from Maxwell David Fraser a well-known London lawyer and land owner for \$100. As an interesting historical footnote, according to the original deed the terms of sale were “subject to the (following) reservations, limitations, provisos and conditions expressed in the...Grant thereof from the Crown.”

(a) There shall not at any time hereafter be placed or erected upon the said lands any building other than a private dwelling house or houses with appropriate outbuildings to be used in connection therewith, and no trade or business of any kind shall be carried on the said lands.

(b) Any dwelling house erected or placed on the said lands shall be erected in a good, substantial and workmanlike manner, at a cost of not less than one thousand dollars, and the front wall thereof shall be not less than fifteen feet distant from the street; and, excepting bay windows, verandahs, porches, and boundary fences not more than four feet high, no structure of any material whatever shall be erected or placed on the said lands within fifteen feet of the street line.

Shortly after Fred Dicks purchased the lot he sold it to William Phillips, also a florist, and his wife Kate Phillips for \$360 payable "in thirty-five consecutive monthly installments of ten dollars each from the first day of December 1907..." The house was finally built in 1910. Because Iroquois Avenue is not shown on the 1914 map, it would seem that the street must have been surveyed at least as early as 1907 to determine the exact location of the property or street line. Hence, the house was probably erected long before the street was finished. Phillips remained in the house until 1941 when he sold it to Pietro Zanussi who, in turn, lived there until his death around 1964 when his children took possession.

The neighbourhood gradually took shape between 1910 and 1930. As shown on the 1940 map, by the late 1930s a fairly large number of homes had been constructed on the south side of Devonshire, although fewer had been built on the north side and extremely few had been constructed on either Iroquois or Elworthy. In addition, it was not until 1943 that sanitary sewers were added and it also was not until around this time that the streets were paved. Despite these shortcomings, fire protection, electrical power, and water were provided to the residents by the city of London. Police protection, on the other hand, was not offered by the city but instead was provided by the Ontario Provincial Police until annexation occurred in 1961.

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Our Big Toboggan Slides

Catherine B. McEwen

In the Beginning

Prior to the mid-nineteenth century in Canada, toboggans were utilitarian vehicles used by Natives to transport their families and supplies across the frozen north. Several birch slats, bent up at the front, were held together by cross ribs and were usually pulled by people, or occasionally by dogs. The fun of sliding down slopes had not gone unnoticed. By 1860, people around Quebec City had taken up tobogganing as a winter recreation and its popularity gradually spread. Lord Dufferin, Governor-General of Canada, created a public slide at Rideau Hall in Ottawa in 1872. Many people took up the sport in the eastern sections of the country wherever there were large enough hills. Enthusiasts banded together to form the Montreal Toboggan Club in 1881.

The Daily Free Press noted that a young boy was seen with London's first-known toboggan on January 3, 1870. Interest grew but there were no organized undertakings until the winter of 1884-85. A club with approximately 80 members was formed which built a slide on the Military Grounds near the northeastern corner of Wellington Street and Central Avenue. Both *The Daily Free Press* and *The London Advertiser* carried the club's first advertisement on Saturday, January 3, 1885, in the "Amusements" column. The ad informed the public that family season tickets would cost \$5 and they could be purchased by applying to bank clerk W.B. Wolseley at the Bank of Montreal.

*Behold the toboggan,
a new-fangled notion,*

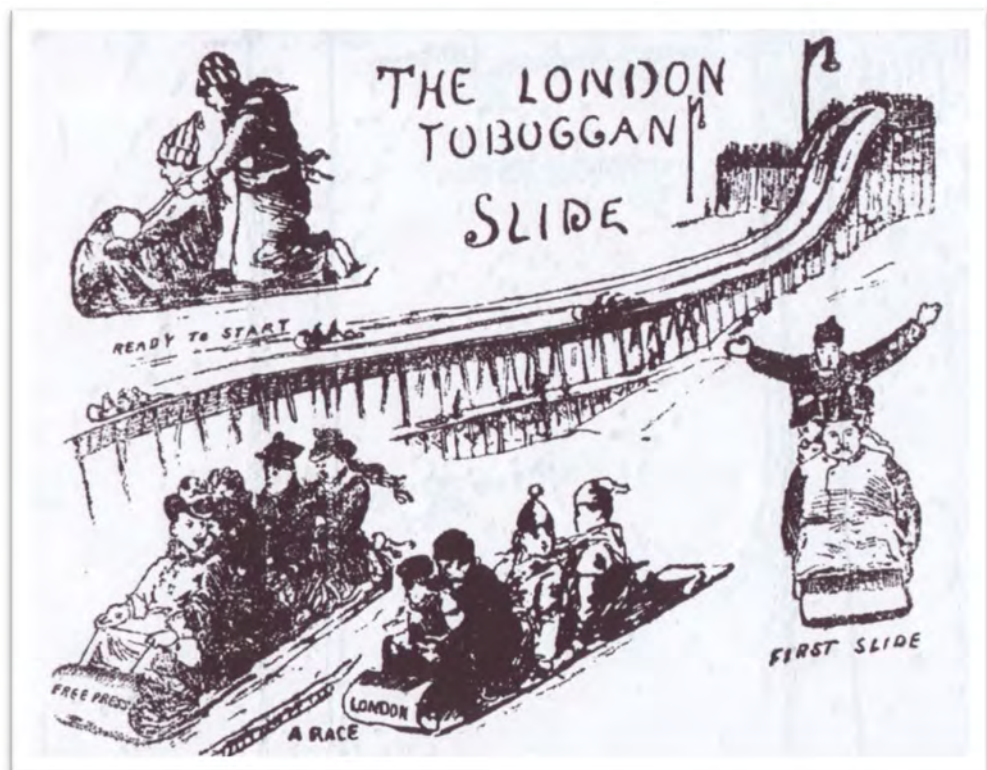
*A broad board and
thin, that's turned up
at the ends,*

*And goes down a hill
with a swiftness of
motion*

*Which naught but a
flash to the scenery
lends.*

- Unknown¹

Right: *The Daily Free
Press*, Jan. 17, 1888



The slide was a wooden ramp about 4.5 metres wide on an incline of 45 degrees. Stairs on one side, with a narrow ramp for pulling up the four-seater toboggans, led to a landing at the top of the double chute, enabling two toboggans to descend at the same time. The planking was flooded to make a thin coating of ice down its face. The run ended after gliding across 60 to 75 metres of compacted snow on the level ground. The Seventh Fusiliers' Band serenaded the merry-makers who could get refreshments in the nearby Gun Shed to the south of Central Avenue.

A new advertisement appeared in *The Daily Free Press* on Monday, January 19, 1885, (subsequently carried by its rival newspaper) stating that the slide would be open afternoons and evenings to subscribers. While the fee schedule for families remained the same, gentlemen's season tickets would cost \$3 and ladies' season tickets would be \$2. People should "Apply to Caretaker." Two days later, the newspapers carried this additional announcement: "Tobogganing – A grand fete open to the public, will be given on the Military Grounds on Wednesday evening, Jan. 21 and every following Wednesday, weather permitting, from 8 to 10 o'clock. Admission 25 cents. Toboggans can be hired at the grounds." The next day it was reported that: "... Owing to the intense cold the attendance was hardly so large as expected, but a jolly time was put in by those present ..."

The Robert Wallace store, "Clothier and Gents' Outfitters" at 146 Dundas Street, advertised "Tobogganing Costumes Made To Order On Short Notice." The store had a good selection of blue, white and fancy striped blankets in stock for making coats, as well as various colours of sashes to match. Thomas Beattie & Co. at 176-178 Dundas Street also carried ladies and misses long woolen tobogganing stockings in all sizes and would make blanket coats to order "on the shortest notice."

Full Stock TOBOGGAN BLANKETS

JUST TO HAND.

Navy, with Old Gold Border.
Navy, with Cardinal Border.
Royal Blue, with Black Border.
Royal Blue, with Gold Border.
Royal Blue, with Fancy Border.
Cardinal, with Blue Border.
White, with Blue Border.
White, with Fancy Border.
Grey, with Fancy Border.

Plain White, Grey and Garnet
 Full Ranges in Tuques, Sashes and
 Stockings.

BURNS & BAPTY,
 154 DUNDAS STREET.

London Advertiser, Jan. 26, 1888

These coats with their colourful borders reached down to the knees and were tied at the waist with knitted scarves adorned with tassels, as were the matching knitted tuques. Ladies often wore variations of this headgear, but buckskin moccasins were the choice of all. A suit could cost upward of \$10 while a toboggan could range from \$3.50 to \$100.

The initial newspaper report said: "There seems to be no danger attending this sport, as there is nothing at the foot of the incline to collide with, and an upset is seldom seen." ² A month later, however, a different story appeared in *The London Advertiser*: "A devotee of the toboggan sport at the military grounds has been laid up for two days with a seriously damaged countenance sustained while enjoying an audacious dash on the slide." Accidents at other locations in Canada and the United States became more widespread. A man at Woodstock was knocked senseless and hurt badly when he ran into a fence. In spite of such reports, as many as 75 toboggans a night could be found at the slide.

Well-known American humorist Mark Twain (Samuel L. Clemens) and novelist George W. Cable appeared at Victoria Hall in London on February 13, 1885. The next morning they visited Hellmuth Ladies' College on the northern extension of Richmond Street at the Thames River where they were introduced to tobogganing on the school's hills. The students took advantage of the occasion to get their guests' autographs.

1885-86

By December 1885, *The Daily Free Press* reported on plans for a new season of fun in the area. "There is talk of organizing a tobogganing club in Parkhill this winter. Last season a few parties indulged in this pastime there." The weather co-operated enough for the slide on the Military Grounds to re-open on Monday, January 11, 1886. Approximately 150 people paid \$3 for single membership badges in the London club or \$6 per family. Secretary Gordon, on behalf of the board of directors, had arranged for a room in the old Crystal Palace, a short distance eastward, to be furnished with a stove and adequate seating for the ladies. Hot coffee and snacks were available to all. Toboggans were kept on tables in another part of the building where they could be stored conveniently for the whole season for a small fee.³

The starting platform was 38 feet (11.6 m) high, while the double chute was sided and divided by foot-high boards and was 160 feet (48.6 m) long. The course was lit by two rows of lanterns which went from the top of the ramp down to the end of the 85-metre-long run where a cushioning bank of snow was piled up against the street-side fence. A wide cross-section of the public made use of the slide. Mature family men with children in tow mingled with fearless young boys intent on taking their trips standing up and first-time sliders whose uncertain expressions soon changed to eager anticipation

for the next descent. Young couples had their own way of doing things as the gentleman waited solicitously for his lady to settle herself in the front, then, on the word, he quickly pushed off, leaping onto the back end before steadying the craft down the course. There were always a few brash types who tried to start too soon before the previous toboggan had passed the red light marking the bottom of the chute. The men in charge had to keep them from pushing off before the red starter's flag was dropped at that point.

Meanwhile, negotiations had been going on for some time to exchange the centrally-located militia grounds north and east of Victoria Park for a more distant site. Finally, a contract was signed in February 1886 which paved the way for the move to Carling's farm on the south side of Oxford Street, well to the east of Adelaide. The city soon found other uses for the former military lands, such as building lots and a baseball field. This meant that a new location was needed for a slide. Rumours of such a change had been fuelled by an anonymous letter to a local newspaper in January. When a *Free Press* reporter asked Secretary Gordon about this possibility, he brushed it off with: "I don't think it worthwhile paying attention to his [the writer's] absurdities." But big things were afoot behind the scenes.

1886-87

Plans for a new toboggan slide on the east bank of the Thames River, between the forks and Blackfriars Bridge, were made public in early December of 1886. William Tytler was the contractor who would build the 480-foot-long (146 m) wooden structure said to be going in behind Edward Harris' home at Eldon House. In fact, the location proved to be several blocks further up Ridout Street near the west end of Albert Street on a vacant lot owned by Col. John Walker, Registrar of Middlesex County.

The starting point for the dual chute, boarded down its entire length, would be 4.5 metres above the top of the high river embankment, then it would dip southerly, crossing over the head-race north of Joseph D. Saunby's Blackfriars Mill and end on the river flats. It opened the week before Christmas with the added excitement of three overhead electric lights! This innovation helped to attract crowds of people on a nightly basis.⁴

Other changes were taking place too, for Mr. Gordon had been replaced as secretary of the London Toboggan Club by George B. Beddome, a teller at Molsons Bank. He lived on Albert Street, conveniently close to the slide. Also, instead of locally made-to-order clothing, Robert Wallace's store began advertising its stock of men's tobogganing suits made in Montreal especially for their trade here in London. Of course, there were tuques and sashes to match "at prices much lower than these goods have been heretofore offered at." Membership fees, however, remained the same.

REID'S HARDWARE
 —FOR—
SPRING SKATES,
STAR TOBOGGANS,
HAND SLEIGHS,
 Boys' Coasters and Babies' Cutters.
 All of the above at prices that cannot be beat.
JAS. REID & CO.,
 No. 118 (north side) Dundas Street.

London Advertiser, Jan. 17, 1888, p. 3

An unidentified *Free Press* reporter wrote a glowing article after experiencing the slide first-hand in January 1887. He painted a word picture worthy of repeating – in part at least. He mentioned tobogganing's modest beginnings on the Military Grounds and how quickly its popularity had grown, then

continued: "What was wanted was something approaching a natural slide, steep and long. The gentleman whose practical eye discovered such a spot on Blackfriars Hill is deserving of a knighthoodThe long and sharp incline at that beautiful spot has been transformed into what is undoubtedly one of the finest slides in the Dominion."

He went on to describe his ride, saying: "It was but the work of a few moments to place the scribe on the front of the toboggan with a lady behind (this was mean), and the tobogganist, with one leg swinging free as a kind of rudder, at the back. Somebody gave the sled a shove and away she went. As what is called the 'main dip' came in sight, the reporter's heart collided with his epiglottis, his hair bristled up on end, and he thought if he had to go down there it would be well if he had made a will disposing of his various estates before leaving home."

The steersman's advice to "Hold on tightly!" was totally unnecessary. The reporter continued: "They say when a man begins to go downhill, he is apt to go pretty fast. Anyone who doubts this has not passed through the experience of shooting down a genuine toboggan slide. The sensation is a sort of cross between falling down a well and getting married. You feel you are going, it may be all right, it is too late to stop, but just where you are going to land or how the time will end is terribly uncertain. Fast? No express train ever equalled the speed, the terrific momentum which the toboggan attains at that supreme moment; but it is soon over. There is a whizz, a thousand electric shocks as the frosty air cuts against your face, a flash as you pass one, two, three electric lights, and then you glide swiftly over the ice and snow on the river, bump over half a dozen little hillocks and finally come to a standstill about three or four hundred yards from the point of starting. The walk back up by a winding, easy path, is where the exercise comes in."

Later that month, the safety standards at the slide were put to the test. Three young ladies and one young gentleman began their downward journey but just past the “dip”, the lady at the front lost her grip and fell off. After the sled hurtled past her, she rolled and slid to the level portion of the chute on her own momentum. “Fortunately, the rule which prohibits a second sled from going down until the first has passed a certain point was being observed at the time.” The young lady sustained no ill effects but did not venture down the slide again that day.⁵

1887-88

London's next tobogganing season did not get under way until January of 1888 when two slides began competing for patrons. The 800-member London Toboggan Club opened a new slide farther up the eastern embankment of the Thames. It was usually called the north end or London North slide. The dual chute was higher and longer than the previous one, being 82 feet (25 m) high and 780 feet (238 m) long with a total run of 1,620 feet (495 m). It took 21 seconds for the descent but the riders faced a long walk back up the path dragging their toboggans. J.C. Dodd & Sons, the contractors, used nearly 60,000 feet of lumber in its construction. The slide and its equipment, including four electric lights, cost \$1,600. Its starting point was west of Talbot Street near Mill Street and it angled in a northwesterly direction behind the Carling Brewery, finishing on the flats near the Oxford Street bridge.

Over 2,000 people watched the preliminary heats of the club's first (and only) annual races on the evening of Tuesday, January 17th. There were 33 entries: six for the mixed tandem, 18 for the gentleman's tandem and nine for the gentleman's fours. Because of the large number of entries, the run-offs had to be postponed to January 20th and the finals were held on January 21st. Subsequently, Mr. Lefroy and lady won the mixed tandem in a very close race on his “Star” toboggan, while Masuret and

Mulkern won the gentleman's tandem, by a nose, on Mr. Masuret's “Dart”. The gentleman's fours was won by the team of Tuson, Furness, Collett and Macbeth on Mr. Perrin's “Blizzard.”⁶

Not to be outdone, London South opened its own facility that January. At that time, the area referred to as London South was still part of Westminster Township and was not annexed into the city until 1890. The Victoria Toboggan Slide⁷ was located on the hill on the north side of Craig Street, within view of the Victoria bridge to the east. Vacant lots between 47 and 57 Craig Street provided adequate space for this venture. From the brink of the hill, riders accelerated down the icy chutes, then flew through two dips on an open course across the flats where they were challenged by a few trees for added excitement. Sometimes toboggans ended their run by careening over the riverbank onto the ice. Since the Thames was quite shallow here, drowning was not a concern. This area would be transformed into Thames Park several decades later. The club's races were held on the evening of February 10th when calcium or lime lights were used to illuminate the scene. The winners were captained by Mr. Barker for the mixed twos, John Livesley for the threes and Charles Tuson for the fours.

The London Toboggan Club held a special event at the north end slide on February 14th – a carnival to raise funds for the Convalescent Home. Over \$130 was cleared after the directors paid all the expenses for the illuminations and fireworks. Eight sleds vied for a silver cup donated by the president, businessman George S. Birrell. The winning team, captained by Mr. McNab, included Bernard C. McCann, Edward Sayers and James B. McKillop.⁸ If that cup still exists, it would be one of London's rarest artifacts.

Later that week, Ralph Hodgins suffered a serious injury while tobogganing at the Victoria slide. He owned the Hodgins House, formerly known as Balkwill's Hotel, on the northwest corner of King and Talbot streets. He had been born in Biddulph Township, the

sixth of eleven children of Edward “Gully Ned” and Catherine (Ralph) Hodgins.⁹ Although he tried to avoid a collision with another toboggan by rolling out of its way, he was struck in the head, receiving a concussion which left him unconscious for over an hour. After he was taken home to his hotel, Dr. J.M. Piper attended him.¹⁰ Having remodelled his hotel, Hodgins sold it in 1888 and became the lessee of the White Sulphur Springs baths at the forks of the Thames. He died on January 26, 1892, at the age of forty. His seven brothers and a brother-in-law were pallbearers at his funeral. Could his early death have been the result of lingering effects from the concussion he received at the Victoria slide?

The Daily Free Press noted on February 17, 1888, that: “Delaware boasts the finest natural toboggan slide in Western Ontario. When the machine is let loose on the top it lands the occupants a distance of half a mile in less than a minute.” The Thames River valley has some precipitous slopes at this location which were put to good use by the sporting crowd.

Another county tobogganing site was at Peter McIntyre's farm just north of the village of Komoka in Lobo Township. His house still stands on the top of the hill at 22929 Komoka Road in Middlesex Centre. The run started below the south side of his home, then dropped sharply over the steep face of the hill and ended near the spot where a new railway station would be built in 1890.

1888-89

In London, James Shaw, manager of the Victoria slide, began advertising its imminent opening in mid-December of 1888. People could purchase their season's badges at Halle's music store on Richmond Street or at Shaw's grocery store in London South.

At the same time, a new contender came on the scene when Robert Bremner, brother of London newspaperman Archie Bremner, advertised that his Richmond

Toboggan Slide would be opening soon. Badges could be bought at Thomas Gillean's jewelry store or at the slide's on-site office at the southern terminus of Richmond Street at the Thames River. There was no bridge there at that time. Membership rates were: families - \$5; singles - \$3; ladies - \$1. It opened on December 20th with a good crowd on hand. The course of the slide, which started just above Hunt's dam, went straight up the frozen river and was lit by electric lights. The return trip was made by way of a gradually rising route along the riverbank which eliminated the need to climb any steps. Unfortunately, a thaw set in which adversely affected the condition of the ice and showed the fundamental weakness of this type of slide. The following ad appeared in *The Daily Free Press* on January 2, 1889:

RICHMOND TOBOGGAN SLIDE –
In consequence of the unfavorable season, the proprietor has determined to reduce the prices as follows: Family and gentlemen, \$2; ladies, \$1. Those who have paid full rates will have their money refunded to the above scale on application at the Slide office.

After the return of cold weather, London South's slide re-opened on January 10, 1889. Manager James Shaw lived nearby and worked for his father, George, who owned the grocery store at the corner of Craig Street and Wortley Road. James prepared the slide for the crowd that evening by using several teams of horses pulling scrapers to cover any bare spots with snow. He also made sure the chutes were well coated with ice. The Richmond slide was able to resume operations five days later.

The Glenmore slide was completed later that month.¹¹ Several sleigh-loads of London Hunt Club members tried it out for the first time on January 23rd, then enjoyed a few games of whist in the clubhouse. The original Glenmore property was in London Township on the east side of what would become Western Road. The

clubhouse was high atop the south bank of Medway Creek on land that would eventually become part of the campus of Western University. Mr. L. Bartlett also had a slide that year at the south end of Colborne Street on the banks of the south branch of the Thames. By the end of the month, *The London Advertiser* announced: "All the toboggan slides are now in full blast, and the citizens may have unlimited choices."

The touring Albani Company arrived in London on Thursday, February 14th, much to the delight of local opera lovers. Emma Albani was a French Canadian soprano who had studied in Montreal, Paris and Milan before making her debut at London, England's Covent Garden in 1872. The London Hunt Club invited the members of the company out to Glenmore on Friday afternoon where they inspected the kennels before trying out the toboggan slide for a short time. The ladies, in particular, appreciated that fun. Next, a fox was released: "... followed by the hounds and two or three mounts. Luckily the animal described a circle [circled back] and was caught and killed in view of the entire party. The troupe returned to the city delighted with the pleasant treatment they had received." After the evening's performance at the Grand Theatre, several Hunt Club officials were personally received by Albani who thanked them for their hospitality but added that she was "so sorry for the poor little fox."¹²

That same evening, a series of races took place at the Victoria slide between two toboggan teams. *The London Advertiser* reported that: "The sliding was the finest of the season, the course extending over the ice on the river."

"Jack the Ripper", owned by William Moore, with his crew of C. Tatham and H. Turner, took on B. Harding, H. Harding and Thomas Gerry on Egerton R. Robinson's "Blizzard". The latter were successful.

Tobogganers participated in the sport at various locations beyond the city in 1889. A new slide was built in Lobo Township by a number of young men of the neighbourhood, patterning it after the one they had seen in London. John Lamont's farm on the corner of the Lobo-Caradoc townline (Amiens Road) and the 5th concession (Lamont Drive) is now in the municipality of Middlesex Centre. The farm's natural terrain had an ideal spot for a toboggan run on a steep hillside leading down into the Gold Creek valley.

A large wooden structure, four or five metres high with a railed platform, was built above the brow of the hill. This platform was large enough to hold several people and a toboggan and was reached by a ladder stairway. A boarded chute with several dips was built down the incline to provide extra speed and thrills before the toboggans shot across the snow-packed course on the valley's floor. The run took approximately 10 seconds under ideal conditions and was well lit by hanging lanterns. Crowds gathered here nightly by the sleigh-load from such nearby villages as Komoka, Poplar Hill, Ivan, Coldstream and even as far away as Strathroy, bringing their toboggans with them.¹³ This slide was only a few kilometres northwest of Peter McIntyre's place. In order to stave off the competition, McIntyre refurbished his slide, raising its height by about nine metres.



Left:
Site of the 1889 toboggan run
on Amiens Road south of Lamont Drive.

Photo credit: Amanda McEwen

1889-90-91

The winter of 1889-90 was unusually warm. Virtually no snow fell until the second week of February 1890. *The London Advertiser* reported that for the first time in memory, Lake Erie's "Rond Eau" had been ice-free and navigable for small boats. Although the Lamont slide had been discontinued, Peter McIntyre's run was still open for business once the snow reappeared. Faced with a shortened tobogganing schedule in London, manager James Shaw decided against issuing seasonal badges and sold nightly admission tickets only at the Victoria slide.

In an apparent turnaround, the winter of 1890-91 started early. There were large crowds at the opening of the London South slide on December 6th and the north end slide on December 12, 1890. In spite of this renewed impetus, the writing was on the wall. A local shoe store clerk told a *Free Press* reporter: "We are not selling moccasins this winter. They have ceased to be the rage, as they were two years ago." The city's snow plows were needed eleven times before Christmas but only once afterwards. The weather had curtailed most tobogganing by the middle of January 1891. On January 19, 1892, the same newspaper stated that sleigh ride parties were "all the rage". Tobogganing was not mentioned once.

The exciting but brief era of the big toboggan slides was over. Did some fickle weather play a role in their demise or did people simply decide that natural hills could provide

them with enough pleasure? They might have been shorter or less precipitous than the artificial slopes but they were free. Skating, snowshoeing, sleighing and tobogganing were all popular in a day when people were used to making their own amusements. Skiing had not yet come into its own.

Some enthusiasts tried to revive the big slide idea early in 1920 when a new city reservoir was about to be built on the heights overlooking Springbank Park. It was suggested that a major toboggan run, more than 600 metres long, could be created by embanking the road that snaked its way down the hill to the park's pumphouse entrance. Why not build it, along with the reservoir, and include its cost in the estimates? Proponents mentioned the five-mile-long Christiana slide in Norway which was served by cable cars. With some creative planning, London could have a smaller version of that world-famous winter destination. Alas, when E.V. Buchanan, general manager of the Public Utilities Commission, was presented with the proposal, he turned it down.¹⁴

Although skiing and snowboarding may top the list of current winter sports, the first good snowfall still finds people happily sliding down hills, free or otherwise, on anything that glides. Recreational demands for large-scale downhill thrills are being met by clubs and commercial facilities, but the big toboggan slides of the nineteenth century undoubtedly sparked the trend toward the mammoth groomed runs of today.

End Notes

1. author unknown, *The Daily Free Press*, January 25, 1886, p. 8, c. 4
2. *Ibid*, January 19, 1885, p. 3, c. 4
3. *Ibid*, January 25, 1886, p. 8, c. 3
4. *Ibid*, December 13, 1886, p. 3, c. 2
5. *Ibid*, January 20, 1887, p. 3, c. 2
6. *The London Advertiser*, January 23, 1888, p. 1, c. 3
7. *The Daily Free Press*, January 17, 1888, p. 5, cc. 3-5
8. *The London Advertiser*, February 15, 1888, p. 5, c. 1
9. Lester Hodgins, compiler, *Hodgins ... Kindred Forever*, (Vancouver, B.C.: International Centre Hodgins Family History Society, 1977), p. 188
10. *The Daily Free Press*, February 20, 1888, p. 8, c. 2
11. *The London Advertiser*, January 25, 1889, p. 8, c. 3
12. *Ibid*, February 18, 1889, p. 6, c. 3
13. Florence Tilden Harrison, "Big Toboggan Slide At Lamont Farm In Lobo Provided Many Winter Thrills", *The London Free Press*, January 6, 1951, p. 12, the writer's mother was a Lamont
14. *Ibid*, February 17, 1920, p. 2, c. 4

Grave Concerns: An Examination of Brick Street Cemetery

Glen Curnoe

In the 1950s, my mother, grandmother and I often visited Brick Street Cemetery (370 Commissioners Road West, London, Ontario) to wander among the graves. Some of the names on the headstones were familiar to my elders. My mother's family, the Porters, lived in Westminster Township in the area known as Glendale, the hub of which was at the junction of the second concession and Wharncliffe Road. That corner is now within the city of London at Southdale and Wharncliffe roads. My grandmother recalled seeing the horses and buggies of a funeral cortege passing by their home on the way to the cemetery.



1918 photo of Lorne Dale, left, a descendant of Jacob and Anne, and Stan Porter, right (photo by Reg Porter)



Porter residence, Wharncliffe Road South, 1917
(photo by Reg Porter)

Glendale was named after the Dale family who were early settlers. Jacob Dale (1767-1852) and his wife Anne (Landos) (1775-1865) came to Westminster Township around 1811. They are buried in Brick Street Cemetery along with many members of their family.

Brick Street Cemetery, one of the oldest in London, is an intriguing example of a pioneer burial ground. Its ambience was the cause for many return visits over the years to read the epitaphs on the headstones and to study their motifs. In the early 1970s, I bought a camera and started taking pictures of some of the stones. This hobby, which expanded to researching the names on the headstones, led to the discovery of some interesting genealogical information. The social structure of the area, ethnic identities and religious affiliations also came to light, along with various local events that took place over the years. Eventually, I joined a group called the Friends of Brick Street Cemetery.

This 0.40 hectare churchyard contains approximately 600 graves, but only 400 stones are visible, therefore there are about 200 unmarked graves. Empty areas throughout the grounds presented a mystery. Prodding was the first method used to try to find lost graves and buried stones. The most sophisticated search, however, was done using a system called

Ground Penetrating Radar to identify potential features such as grave shafts and markers. This is a non-destructive and environmentally friendly method of underground exploration. Only designated sections of the cemetery have been surveyed with this procedure so far.

The hunt began for the names of the people who were buried in the unmarked graves. There are many sources for finding this information such as genealogies, cemetery records, vital statistics, land records, church records, wills, military records, newspapers and sites on the internet. To date, over 100 people in the unmarked graves have been identified. Some of their names have been inscribed on auxiliary bricks and placed at appropriate locations throughout the grounds by the Friends of Brick Street Cemetery. (See the appendix). Of course, that leaves approximately 100 unnamed people out of the original 200 unmarked graves. The earliest interments were probably never recorded and there are no surviving cemetery records since they were stored in the Lambeth United Church which was destroyed by fire on January 27, 1952.¹

The location of the cemetery on Commissioners Road is worth noting. In anticipation of war between Britain and the United States in the early 19th century, a Commission was appointed by the government of Upper Canada to build a military road from Burlington to Detroit. The road followed an old Indian trail and became a major thoroughfare for travellers on foot, on horseback, in covered wagons and in stagecoaches. During the War of 1812, troops passed along this route. Subsequently, 12 known combatants in that war were buried here.

The cemetery's name was derived from a small section of Commissioners Road, between Wellington Road and the foot of Reservoir Hill, known as Brick Street. On farms between Wharncliffe Road and modern Wonderland Road, clay was discovered that was ideal for making bricks. Nathan Griffith and his brother Ezra established the first of several brick works

here in 1816.² The local bricks were buff coloured and were used in many buildings over the years. For example, in 1854, 120,000 bricks were ordered from a brickyard owned by a Mr. McNames of Westminster for a house being erected for a Mr. Anderson.³ This may have been Murray Anderson, the first mayor of the incorporated city of London.

As one enters the churchyard, one notices that the headstones face east. This was a common practice in many early burial grounds. Christians who believed in the resurrection of the dead wished to position their loved ones so they could see the Second Coming of Christ.

“For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.” (Matthew 24:27)

Grave markers evolved over time. Initially, wooden crosses or name boards and crudely carved pieces of fieldstone were used. These were supplanted by slabs of soft white marble. Although this material was easy to carve, it also eroded from water and the elements, gradually becoming rough and granular. In damp, shady areas lichen grew on the stones. For these reasons some of the motifs and lettering have become indecipherable over time.

Eventually, newer techniques were employed as stone masons, sculptors and artists settled in the area. These artisans often carved their names and the locations of their shops at the base of the headstones. It was the professional stone carvers who introduced the decorative motifs which were chosen on the basis of the aesthetics of the time, as well as the personal preferences of the families. The cemetery contains a wealth of the most common and popular motifs which include urns, weeping willows, doves, lambs, flowers, hands, angels and the open Bible. The best time to tour this churchyard is before noon, when the sun faces the stones making the inscriptions more readable.



Collage of motifs from Brick Street Cemetery, c 1973

A Stroll Through Brick Street Cemetery is a Step Back in History

The following is a small selection of a few of the individuals buried in the cemetery. A compiled list of the unmarked graves known to date is included in the appendix.

Peter McNames

Peter McNames (1788-1855), who was born in New York State, immigrated to Canada with his family in 1804, and settled in Oxford County. Peter joined the Oxford Militia during the War of 1812 but later moved to Lot 34, Concession 1, Westminster Township. He sold some of his land to the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1851 for 5 shillings to provide a dedicated space for Brick Street Cemetery. The trustees listed on the church's deed were: Nathan Griffith, Ezra Griffith, Thomas Summers, Nelson Norton and Lucien L. McNames.⁴ They are all buried in the cemetery.



Headstone of Peter McNames (1788-1855)

Peter's headstone, which is 160 centimetres tall and impressively detailed, lay in pieces for many years. It has a grapevine motif which represents the promise of abundance in the

next life. The final missing piece, which was found underground in 2008, is inscribed with a biblical verse. The stone was repaired and placed upright by the Friends of Brick Street Cemetery in 2011.

Phoebe McNames

Next to Peter lies his first wife Phoebe (nee Brink, c 1798-1824). Her headstone also has been repaired and re-erected by the Friends of Brick Street Cemetery. She is alleged to be the heroine of a skirmish on Reservoir Hill during the War of 1812. It is purported that she provided water and ammunition to the troops.

The Griffith Family

The headstone for Eliza Griffith (1818-1819) is the oldest known marker in the churchyard. It also bears the inscriptions for her siblings, Elizabeth Griffith, who died in 1820, and Lyman Griffith, who died in 1821. These were children of Nathan Griffith and Amelia (Sayles). Nathan moved to Westminster Township around May, 1812, and served at the Battle of Lundy's Lane at Niagara during the War of 1812.



Headstone of Eliza Griffith (1818-1819)

Richard Dale

Not far from the entrance to the cemetery is the headstone of Richard Dale (1859-1862) with the motif of a dove, a common rendering on children's markers. There are many such graves here since the infant mortality rate in the 19th century was very high. The stone, which was unearthed by the Friends of Brick Street Cemetery in 2008, had been underground for at least 100 years. Having been protected from the weather, it looks as if it was carved yesterday, and provides an idea of how a white marble headstone might have looked when new. It may have been carved and erected by the stonemasons Teale and Wilkens of London since their names appear near the bottom. A family headstone was erected on the plot around the turn of the last century so the descendants may have thought that the original marker was redundant and decided to have it buried.



Headstone of Richard Dale (1859-1862)

The Curtis Family

Maria Curtis (nee Carroll, 1801-1871) born in Oxford County was the daughter of Abraham Carroll who built the first hotel in London in 1827.⁵ Called the Mansion House Hotel, it was located on the north side of Dundas Street, east of Ridout. Maria married Silas E. Curtis around 1826 and they lived on Commissioners Road on the east half of Lot 19, 1st Concession. The 1851/52 census listed her as a widow still living at that location. In 1902, her widowed daughter-in-law, Letticia, sold the property and may have used some of the money to erect a new monument and fence on the Curtis plot. The Lethbridge Brothers Monument Works, London did the work. They were in business from approximately 1896 until 1905.



Curtis monument Aug. 17, 2009. Notice the tilt on this large stone inside the fenced enclosure.



Curtis monument being reset, Sept. 17, 2009

Maria Curtis' uncle, Captain John Carroll of the Oxford Militia, was accidentally killed by friendly fire in the War of 1812. It was during an ambush at Reservoir Hill in the late summer of 1814. He had been captured by a party of raiding Americans and was forced to ride Andrew Westbrook's horse at the head of the column of men when he was mistakenly shot for the traitorous Westbrook.

James Greer

The life of James Greer (c 1798-1866) of the Junction, later known as Lambeth, came to a tragic end due to an accident on November 3, 1866. James was driving his team and wagon down Reservoir Hill when one of the wagon's floor boards shifted forward and bumped into the horses' haunches. The horses bolted down the hill at top speed, throwing Greer from the wagon and dragging him along the road. The appearance of the driverless team at Byron was cause for concern and a search was organized. The broken body of Mr. Greer was found at the foot of the hill. He died later that day.⁶

Albert S. Odell

Albert S. Odell (1787-1856) arrived in Westminster Township in 1810. He and his wife Charlotte (nee Percival, 1780-1846), had no children, and as a result 45 relatives were listed as beneficiaries in Albert's will. Among others, William Loop, Priscilla and Eliza Odell each received \$100 (\$1,670 today⁷) upon their uncle's death in 1856.⁸ Albert and his wife each have a headstone in the same row as their niece Priscilla.



Headstone of Priscilla Odell (1825-1859)

William Loop Odell

William Loop Odell (1824-1902) was born in Odelltown, Quebec and moved to Westminster Township in 1837. Shortly after he arrived, he helped clear the land for Wellington Road, which extended from Commissioners Road to London. The construction of Wellington Road included the first bridge across the Thames River on this route. William was a blacksmith, a farmer and a noted horseman. In 1847, he married his cousin Priscilla Odell (1825-1859), a daughter of John Odell and Annis (nee Griffith). William bought 7 1/2 acres on the northwest corner of Commissioners Road (Brick Street) and Wellington Road in 1856, which became known as Odell's Corners. He built the Warrior Hotel there, (later renamed the Odell Hotel⁹), and was appointed the first postmaster of Odell's Corners. On September 21, 1883, the annual exhibition of the Westminster Agricultural Society was held on his property adjoining the Odell Hotel with 900 people in attendance.¹⁰ After Priscilla's death in 1859, William married her sister Eliza (c1821-1906). William and his two wives, are buried here. Priscilla has a headstone, but William and Eliza do not.

Margaret Nixon

The left side of the stone has an inscription for Margaret Nixon (c 1837-1891) who predeceased her husband. The right side is blank.



Right: Headstone of Margaret Nixon (c 1837-1891)

Ground Penetrating Radar shows that there are three adults buried here. They would be Margaret, presumably her husband James Nixon (c 1828-1907) and someone else whose name is unknown.



Use of Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) to search for graves in front of the Nixon headstone, Nov. 9, 2012

John O'Neill

John O'Neill (1797-1859) was born in the Niagara District but moved to the London District around 1822. He joined Mount Moriah Lodge in Westminster Township and was an active member of the area's earliest Masonic fraternity. He was a member of the governing Police Board in London's early days, and served on its town and city councils. John was a tavern keeper in London and operated the Prospect House Hotel near Blackfriars Bridge, around 1851, which was advertised as "a good house and good liquors." He also ran a saloon on Market Square in 1857. After he died in September of 1859, he was buried with full Masonic honours.¹¹

Barnabus Skuse

Barnabus Skuse (1843-1890) was born in Westminster Township. He gave up farming in 1882 when he purchased a limestone quarry in the township, where he operated a lime kiln. His business grew and he became a successful manufacturer and dealer of building materials. Around 1867, Barnabus married Hannah

Griffith (1849-1873). Shortly after Hannah's death, he married her sister Annis (1852-1921) in November of 1873 at Evergreen Cottage on Commissioners Road (Brick Street).¹² By 1888, his lime yard was located at 93 York Street in London. An advertisement for the company boasted that they had a full stock of different types of lime, plaster of Paris, cement, lath and hair, although building stone was a speciality.¹³

Barnabus died on May 31, 1890 at the age of 46. Since he was an active Mason in several lodges, a Masonic symbol is carved above his name on the family gravestone. A large group of friends and lodge members gathered to commemorate his death. Led by a band, the mourners marched to the boat dock at the foot of Dundas Street at the forks of the Thames River, where they boarded a waiting steamer which transported them to Cooper's wharf. The party then proceeded to Barnabus's home on Commissioners Road (Brick Street) and then on to the cemetery. Those going back to the city re-boarded the steamer for the trip home.¹⁴

Oliver Odell

Oliver Odell (c 1836-1870) married Lois Ann Bostwick in 1856. Their infant son Eddy Odell's headstone (1866-1867) can be seen in the northwest section of the cemetery. Oliver was a long-time employee of the London and Port Stanley Railway as a fireman, but later worked in the local oil refining industry. Crude oil came by rail from the Petrolia oil fields in Lambton County to East London, which was often referred to as "The Refinery District".

Oliver died of injuries sustained in an explosion at Englehart's Oil Refinery on Adelaide Street in East London on February 25, 1870.¹⁵ Fires and explosions were not unusual, often with tragic consequences. When a still exploded, the ground would tremble and vast quantities of burning oil would be thrown over the area. Burning oil flowing down ditches and gutters into the river was a common occurrence.

After her husband's death, Lois Odell and her young daughter moved to Independence, Iowa, where Lois married twice more and died there in 1925.



Pieces of Oliver Odell's headstone, some of which remain missing in 2013.

James McLaren

James McLaren (c1785-1868) had a farm located west of Wharncliffe Road on the 1st Concession. His headstone has a carving of an hourglass showing the sands of time which have run out. The hourglass is not a common motif in this area, and this is the only one at Brick Street. The headstone has been carefully repaired and re-erected by the Friends of Brick Street Cemetery.

The annual County Plowing Match was held on James McLaren's farm on September 28, 1851.¹⁶ The names of the

successful competitors were:

MEN – Robert Wilson, best, 1 pound, 10 shillings; Hugh Kennedy, 2nd best, 1 pound; John Crawford, 3rd best, 15 s.

BOYS – Haliburton Kennedy, best, 1 pound 10 s.; William Beattie, 2nd best, 1 pound; Duncan McMillan, 3rd best, 7 s. 6 d.¹⁷

Margaret McLaren

Margaret McLaren (1790-1893) was born in Scotland and moved to New York State with her parents when she was six years old. She married James McLaren and they had ten children. The family moved to Canada in 1834, settling in Westminster Township. Margaret died in 1893 at the age of 103 years, 5 months and 23 days. She may be the oldest person buried in the cemetery. She does not have a headstone, however, but presumably is buried beside her husband James.



Headstone of James McLaren (c1785-1868)

Luke Rispin

Luke Rispin (1846-1910) was a South London resident. He never married and lived like a hermit in a rudely built log shack. He inherited money and property near the Coves from his father, Richard Rispin (1806-1895). Luke sold most of the property to the Government and moved into a new brick house on Duke Street. At the time of his death, he left an estate valued at about \$20,000 (\$435,500 today).¹⁸ He never displayed his wealth but maintained a simple lifestyle and had an unkempt appearance.

Luke was a reclusive but kindly old man who spent hours working in his garden. Although he kept to himself, he was always ready to lend a hand. His friends and neighbours, who were the chief beneficiaries of his will, were completely surprised by his bequests. Luke's house was left to his housekeeper "for the term of her natural life". She died in 1910, at the age of 80, which was only seven weeks and five days after Luke. According to the conditions of the will, the house went to the Byron Sanatorium.¹⁹

Friends of Brick Street Cemetery – committed to preserving history

The Friends of Brick Street Cemetery have taken a keen interest in maintaining and upgrading this burial ground. Some of the mysteries have slowly unravelled, aided by the use of Ground Penetrating Radar which locates remains in unmarked graves. Broken stones have been unearthed, repaired and re-erected whenever possible. Research on the pioneers of Westminster Township has revealed a thriving, committed community with close ties and far-reaching achievements.

It is hoped that Brick Street Cemetery will continue to draw those interested in the past and provide them with the opportunity to be enlightened by the region's history.

Appendix

Brick Street Cemetery – Listing of unmarked graves (Compiled by Glen Curnoe)

The following is a compiled list of the unmarked graves in the Brick Street Cemetery as at August 13, 2013. As indicated in this article, it is suspected that there are a total of 200 unmarked graves.

*Names marked in this list indicate an auxiliary stone placed by Friends of Brick Street Cemetery.

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Beaman, Sarah (c1861-1925) | 22. Garside, Lillie (1890-1891) |
| 2. Bolton, Laura I. (Nuttall) (Strasser)
(c1870-1943) | 23. Griffith, Amy Catherine
“Emma” (McPherson) (c1855-1893)* |
| 3. Broad, James P. (1837-1898) | 24. Griffith, Elizabeth (c1818- 1820) |
| 4. Bryant, Margaret Lavinia (McCauley)
(c1805-1897)* | 25. Griffith, Elizabeth (c1820-1821)* |
| 5. Bullen, John (c1817-1889) | 26. Griffith, Elizabeth (1827)* |
| 6. Bullen, Martha Grant (c1818-1902) | 27. Griffith, Julia Ann (1828-1830) |
| 7. Clark, Eliza (c1815-1864)* | 28. Haines, Eliza (Manning) (1859-1905) |
| 8. Clark, Elizabeth (c1810-1883) | 29. Haines, Isaac R. (1859-1948) |
| 9. Cocks, Moses (1875) | 30. Hammond, Elizabeth
(Dorman) (Murdock) (c1860 - 1949) |
| 10. Cole, Annie (1884-1920) | 31. Hammond, Hannah Elizabeth
(Leslie) (1864-1934)* |
| 11. Dale, James S. (1861-1929) | 32. Hammond, John (1850-1937) |
| 12. Dale, Sarah Ann (c1819-1889)* | 33. Hart, James (c1807-1877) |
| 13. Darch, Vincent Gordon (1908-1910) | 34. Hart, Mary (c1810-1887) |
| 14. Dorman, Dennis C. (c1842-1907) | 35. Heath, Mary H. (c1874-1875) |
| 15. Eager, John (c1807-1893)* | 36. Hubbard, Frank Lester (1902) |
| 16. Eager, Richard Robert (1850-1926)* | 37. Hubbard, Ray Leslie (1904) |
| 17. Eager, Sarah Ann (Peace)
(c1858-1928)* | 38. Jacobs, Caroline Maude (1838-1858)* |
| 18. Eager, Walter (1879) | 39. Jacobs, Charles (1830)* |
| 19. Fletcher, Jane (Dicy)(c1837-1907) | 40. Jacobs, Elizabeth Ann (Bostwick)
(1803-1871)* |
| 20. Fletcher, Levi Wesley (c1873-1906) | 41. Jacobs, Herman (1827-1832)* |
| 21. Frank, Elizabeth (Dell) (c1788-1874)* | |

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| 42. Jacobs, Horace (1823-1832)* | 72. Odell, Ernest Edward (c1861-1940) |
| 43. Jacobs, Lomire (1825)* | 73. Odell, Harriet (1860-1933) |
| 44. Jacobs, Lorin (1826-1827)* | 74. Odell, Harriet "Hattie" (1862-1935) |
| 45. Jacobs, Lucinda G (1842-1858)* | 75. Odell, Jeremiah "Jerry" (c1872-1941)* |
| 46. Jacobs, Nathan (1787-1861)* | 76. Odell, Mary (Jarvis) (c1857-1909)* |
| 47. Jacobs, Orrin (1829-1852)* | 77. Odell, Percy (c1891-1894)* |
| 48. Jarvis, Ann (Tunks) (c1827-1907)* | 78. Odell, William Loop (1824-1902) |
| 49. Jarvis, Betsy (1834-1839)* | 79. Osborne, Mary A (1910-1913) |
| 50. Jarvis, Oliver E. (1859-1912) | 80. Perkins, Sarah A. (Moore)
(c1842-1915)* |
| 51. Jarvis, Richard Samuel (1852-1931) | |
| 52. Jones, Mary Evans (1874- 1875) | 81. Player, Ida Elizabeth (Topping)
(1865-1935) |
| 53. Joyce, Mary (c1845-1886) | |
| 54. Kerr, Michael Lloyd (1952)* | 82. Player, John H. (1896-1915) |
| 55. Lane, Charles Alfred (1856-1922)* | 83. Player, Lyla Maud (Bowerne)
(1885-1916) |
| 56. Lane, Jane (Trowbridge) (1858-1945)* | |
| 57. Maddie, Charlotte (c1853-1882) | 84. Player, William J. (1861-1931) |
| 58. Mair, William (1850-1933) | 85. Post, Sarah Ellen Margarett
(1903-1904) |
| 59. McIntosh, Annie (c1877-1893)* | |
| 60. McLaren, Margaret (1847-1930) | 86. Purdy, Margaret M. (McIntosh)
(1875-1919)* |
| 61. McLaren, Margaret (1790-1893)* | |
| 62. McLaren, May (1892-1893) | 87. Redding, Emily (c1872-1875) |
| 63. McLaren, Norman Bradley (1938) | 88. Rosell, Ralph (1905-1909) |
| 64. Nichols, David (1833-1920)* | 89. Sample, Arthur (c1875-1876)) |
| 65. Nichols, Lucy (Jones) (c1837-1906)* | 90. Shenick, Jacobus (c1745-1827)* |
| 66. Nixon, James (1828 -1907) | 91. Shenick, John (c1784-1857)* |
| 67. Nixon, Margaret (1868-1924) | 92. Shenick, Mary (c1745-1827)* |
| 68. Nixon, William A. (c1867-1881) | 93. Smith, Harvey (c1860-1881) |
| 69. Norton, George Walker (1865-1929) | 94. Summers, Fanny (c1871-1891) |
| 70. Norton, Ellen "Nellie" (McDonnell)
(c1859-1941) | 95. Summers, James (c1851-1920) |
| | 96. Summers, Robert (1842-1919)* |
| 71. Odell, Eliza (c1821-1906) | 97. Summers, Susan (Eager) (1845-1936)* |

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| 98. Teeple, Burley (c1860-1883)* | 104. Wyant, Sarah Maria (Whitehead) |
| 99. White, Walter Henry (c1859-1918) | (1852-1934)* |
| 100. Whitehead, Emeline (Curtis) | 105. Yeaman, William (1846-1934) |
| (c1813-1906)* | |
| 101. Whitehead, William (c1809-1896)* | Addendum |
| 102. Wood, Ruth Ann Hughena | 106. Egan, (1937) |
| (1930-1931) | 107. Nichols, William F. (1859) |
| 103. Wyant, Frank Benjamin (c1843-1916)* | |

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1. Murray, *175 Years of Worship: Lambeth United Church*, p.25.
2. -----, *History of the County of Middlesex, Canada*, P.368.
3. *Surveyor's notes and notebooks of Samuel Peters*. (microfilm).
4. *Deed to M.E. Church and Cemetery: Memorial No. 438-Peter McNames to The Methodist Episcopal Church, Recorded 30th day of August, 1851.*
5. McEwen, *No Smiling Path*, p.24.
6. *London Free Press*, Morning Edition. Tuesday, Nov. 6, 1866, p.3, c.3.
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11. *London Free Press*, Saturday Morning, Sept. 28, 1859, p.2, c.2.
12. *London Free Press*, Saturday Evening, Nov. 22, 1873, p.2, c.4.
13. *London Free Press*, Wednesday, Feb. 29, 1888, p.8, c.3. *London Free Press*, Monday, June 2, 1890, p.8, c.3.
14. *London Advertiser*, Morning Edition, Tuesday, June 3, 1890, p.8, c.3.
15. *London Advertiser*, Thursday Evening, Feb. 24, 1870, p.3, c.3. *London Free Press*, Friday Morning, Feb. 25, 1870, p.3, c.3.
16. *Canadian Free Press*, Thursday, Oct. 25, 1851, p.7, c.5.
17. *Ibid*
18. Brock, *Fragments From the Forks: London Ontario's Legacy*, p.427.
19. *London Advertiser, Last Edition*, Friday, Nov. 4, 1910, p.7, c.2. *London Free Press*, Friday, Nov. 4, 1910, p.2, c.1. *Ontario Surrogate Courts. Probate Records, 1846-1900, No 347. Western Archives*

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A Revised Account of Simcoe's Exploration of the Forks

Marvin L. Simner

On February 2, 1793, Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe left Newark (today known as Niagara-on-the-Lake) on a month long overland journey to Detroit. The purpose of his journey was to make a detailed inspection of the British position on the western frontier of Upper Canada in anticipation of an American attack (Mombourquette, 1992). Throughout the trip Simcoe was accompanied by Major Edward Baker Littlehales who recorded the journey in his daily diary, and Lieutenant David W. Smith, Acting Surveyor General of Upper Canada. On March 2nd, during the return trip, Simcoe stopped at the Forks of the Thames to explore the possibility of establishing a capital for Upper Canada. Littlehales' description of the events that took place on March 2nd not only indicated the Governor's reaction to this location, but also provided an account of the general topography of the area that existed at the time.

We struck the Thames at one end of a low flat island enveloped with shrubs and trees; the rapidity and strength of the current were such as to have forced a channel though the main land, being a peninsula, and to have formed the island. We walked over a rich meadow, and at its extremity came to the forks of the river. The Governor wished to examine this situation and its environs, and we therefore remained here all day. He judged it to be a situation eminently calculated for the metropolis of all Canada...a pinery upon an adjacent high knoll, and other timber on the heights, well calculated for the erection of public buildings...(Scadding, 1889, reprinted in 1968, p. 12).

This description by Littlehales is frequently cited and it is not uncommon to find that the area described is the region now referred to as the Coves. For example, one of the earliest statements of this nature appeared in the 1897 issue of Illustrated London, Ontario Canada where the author claimed that "Here we have at once a description and an explanation of the coves" (p. 10). More recently Poulton (2004, p. 14) claimed that Littlehales' remarks provide "the first description of the Coves." By far the most detailed linkage with the Coves, however, appeared in a 1938 article in the London Old Boys' Review.

No old-timer in London need be reminded that the water-course which the (Simcoe) party encountered was one of the Coves in the southern part of the City and that it was across the old rifle range property that the party moved in coming to the place where the two branches meet and then continue in one main stream toward Lake St. Clair (p. 21).

The difficulty with these accounts is that no mention is made of the far more specific description of this portion of the trip by Lieutenant Smith. As Acting Surveyor General, Smith's daily records of the journey appeared in the form of surveyor's notes and therefore, were much more precise than Littlehales' statements, which were written in prose. Perhaps because Smith's account makes for less interesting reading, his notes are rarely mentioned. From my review of the notes, however, I believe the emphasis on the Coves that stems from Littlehales' version of the journey might be in error.

Instead, a more likely island could be the one mentioned in Smith's notes at 8:37 a.m. on March 2nd, 1793. The following quotation is from these notes which were reprinted in an article by R. M. Lewis (1952, p. 15-22). According to the second paragraph in the notes the island in question might be the one that once was located on the northwest branch of the Thames in an area now part of Harris Park.

8:37 a.m. Struck the Fork – Halted and determined to encamp. The Plain which seems suitable for Corn, on the North side of the River, below and adjoining the Fork, appears to be of a Triangular figure, the greatest breadth at the Forks being about a quarter of a mile, and its greatest length next to the woods about two miles perhaps more. The River has made efforts to go through the angular part of this Plain adjoining the fork, and a Gully remains testimonial of the

Circumstance; it is probable also this Plain may have been overflowed, but I am of opinion it is not so.

On the North West Branch there is a low Island, very close to the main Fork. The Stream nearest the main and adjoining the Island, might afford perhaps the Seat for a Mill and in the swell of the Banks adjoining, is a small flat, say 4 or 5 acres, and some inferior ones, above this is a handsome commanding pine, which would afford a pleasant situation for a Villa.

About one mile above the Forks, on the North West Branch, is a fine Run of Water from the height of the Land, which promises to afford a good mill Seat - on each side of this Creek is a Pinery - the thickest and largest of the Pines are beyond the Creek.

Rationale

To understand the rationale behind this revised account it is helpful to view two closely related maps of the forks. The first map, reproduced at right with permission from the Western Map Library (see Plate 1), was compiled by McNiff and Jones around 1795 from field notes by A. Jones. This map is useful because it not only contains a rough outline of the route followed by Simcoe on March 2nd and March 3rd but also shows the location of the "Triangular figure" mentioned in Smith's notes (see the 1st paragraph above).

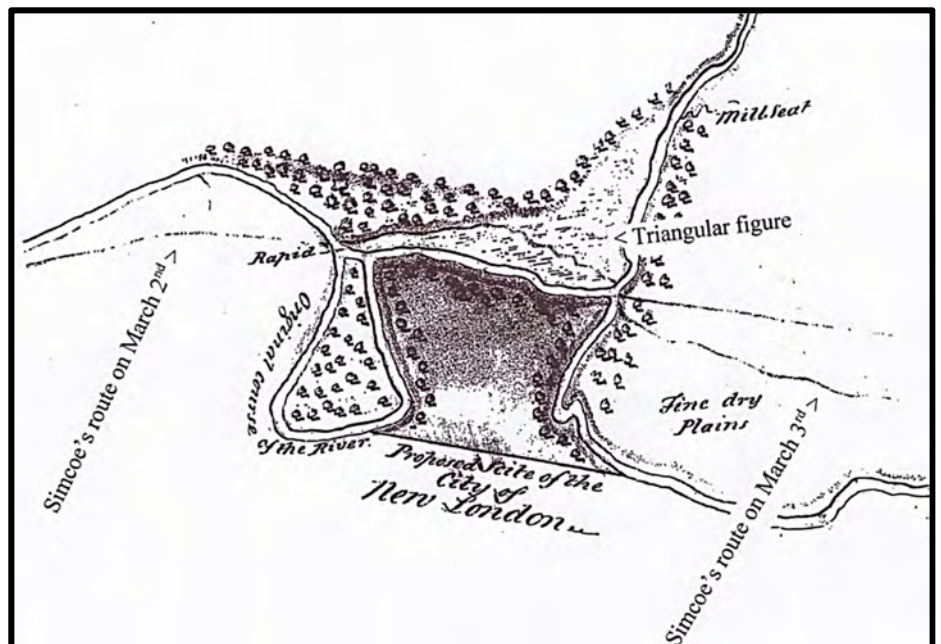


Plate 1

The second map, drawn around 1840 and reproduced below, also with permission from the Western Map Library (see Plate 2), contains the Coves and a small low island on the northwest branch that is probably the one mentioned in Smith's notes but is not apparent on the 1795 map. While the reason for the absence of this island on the 1795 map is unclear, it may have resulted from flooding at the time Jones compiled his notes which would have made the island either difficult to see or of little importance to record. Added to this second map is a more precise rendition of Simcoe's overall route based on the material and times recorded by Smith.

With these two maps in mind, I believe there is sufficient evidence to suggest that during the daylight hours of March 2nd, 1793, the party may have explored the forks, not from the Coves but from the northern-most point on the low island identified by Smith as being on the northwest branch of the Thames. There are several reasons for suggesting that this might be the case. First, it would explain the sighting of a "fine Run of Water from the height of the Land (about one mile above the forks) which promises to afford a good mill Seat," mentioned in the 3rd paragraph of Smith's notes and shown on the map in Plate 1. Unless the party was at this location, it is unlikely that they would have been able to see this body of water. Second,

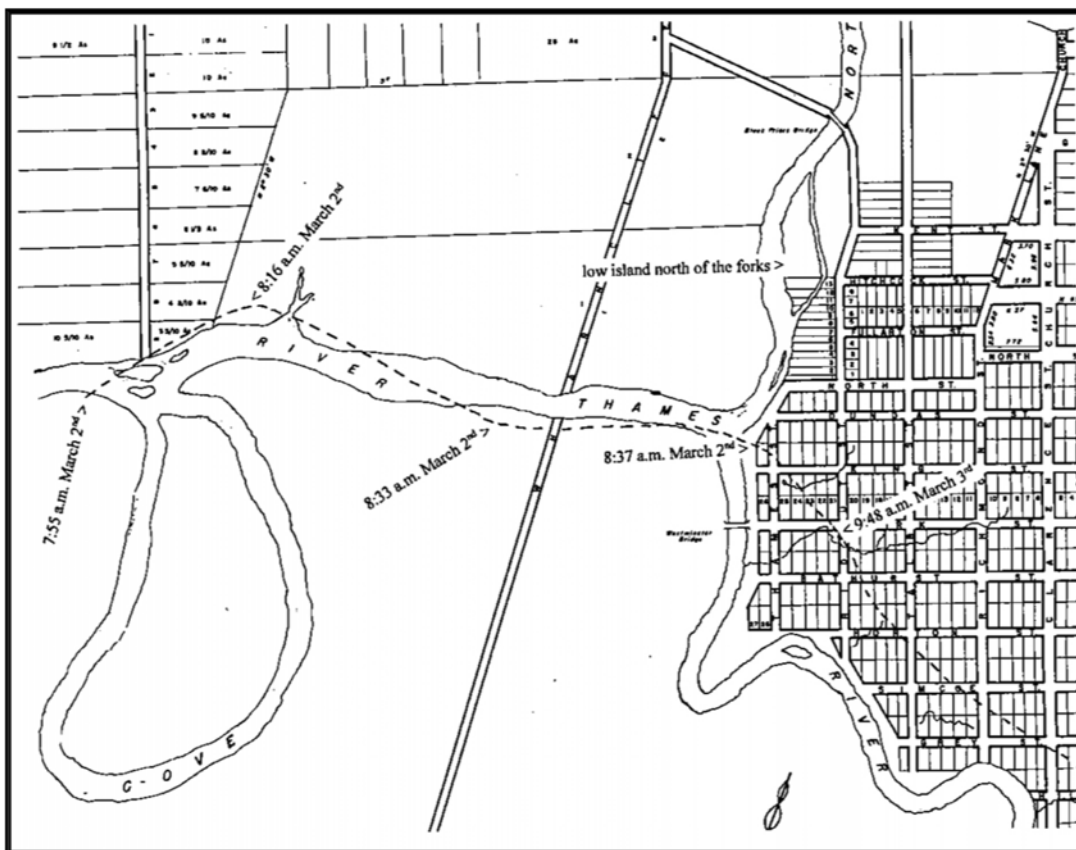


Plate 2

Littlehales' description in the first sentence of his account could as easily apply to this low island as to the Coves. Third, the "channel" in Littlehales' account might also be the "stream nearest the main and adjoining the Island" mentioned by Smith as shown on the 1840 map. Fourth, Littlehales' reference to their walk "over a rich meadow, and at its extremity came to the forks of the river," fits more readily with the topography of the island on the northwest branch than with the Coves because the extreme end of the Coves is nowhere near the forks, yet the extreme southern end of this island is very close to the forks. Finally, it is very clear from Smith's notes that Simcoe spent very little time examining the Coves. As shown on the 1840 map, the first reference in Smith's notes to the area near the Coves occurred at 7:55 a.m. on March 2nd, 1793, the party then crossed the river to the north side of the Thames around 8:16 a.m. and reached the forks at 8:37 a.m. Since there is no further reference to this area in these notes, it would seem that Simcoe would have devoted less than 30 minutes to this region. Moreover, the route the party took on March 3rd following their departure from the forks would have placed Simcoe at a considerable distance from the Coves.

In essence, it would seem from both Smith's and Littlehales' descriptions, the party may have walked south from the northern-most point on an island which is now part of Harris Park to reach the forks. Parenthetically, it is also possible that the location of the villa, mentioned by Smith, could be just above Harris Park where Eldon House now stands, and the "Seat for a Mill" also could be in Harris Park where the Blackfriars Grist Mill once stood (see the 3rd paragraph in Smith's notes).

Addendum

Before leaving this topic there is one additional point concerning the Coves worth addressing. On the 1795 map (see plate 1) there is an area between the Coves and the south branch of the river referred to as the "Proposed

Site of the City of New London." To understand the reason for placing the proposed site here, rather than at the forks, which was Simcoe's ultimate choice, it is helpful to remember that Simcoe was very concerned with the need to obtain a location that would be militarily defensible against an invasion from the United States. Based on Smith's notes at least some of the high ground between the south branch and the Coves was similar in elevation to the high ground at the forks.

On the South East Branch, from the fork, is a strip of Flat of about 2 Acres wide, below the rise of the Hill, which cannot, I think be less than one Hundred feet high. On the South side of the River, below & adjoining the fork is also high Land of about 100 feet above the water...

Thus, by placing a fortified capital on the high ground above the southeast branch, in what is now Wortley Village, this would have made the capital as resistant to attack as if it had been placed on the high ground above the forks. In other words, it is possible that both locations may have been equally favoured for defensive purposes by Simcoe as a future site for the proposed capital of Upper Canada.

A question that remains, though, is why this area was initially selected over the area above the forks. While the reason for Simcoe's initial choice is not entirely certain, it could have resulted from an issue concerning property rights. The area to the south of the Thames, which included this region, had been purchased from the Chippawa, Ottawa, and Potawatomi Nations in 1790 (Armstrong, 1986). Thus the region between the south branch and the Coves was Crown land when Simcoe arrived at the forks in 1793. At that time, however, the area north of the Thames, and therefore the area above the forks, still resided in Native hands. In fact, it wasn't until about 1795 that a detailed survey of this northern region was conducted

which then served as the basis for eventual land negotiations with the Natives (see Surrender Document No. 6, *Indian Treaties and Surrenders*, 1981, Vol. 1, p. 17-19).

With this survey in hand, an agreement between the Crown and the Chippawa Nation to purchase this northern reach of land, which now included the forks, was subsequently concluded on September 7, 1796. Although it cannot be stated for certain, it is possible that, to maintain good relations with the Natives, Simcoe may have considered it improper to place on a map constructed around 1795, "The Proposed Site for the City of New London" on land the Crown did not own at the time.

It is also worth mentioning that Simcoe eventually set aside 3,850 acres on the newly acquired property immediately north of the

forks as Crown Reserve land "for the site of the future provincial capital" (Armstrong, 1986, p. 21). If he truly preferred the site south of the Thames for his proposed capital, presumably he would have set aside this acreage here instead of waiting for the land north of the forks to become available. Moreover, he would have known, as the result of his journey, that this southern location would have been less defensible following an invasion than the area above the forks, because any future supplies of arms, ammunition, and food shipped from the east would have had to cross the south branch of the Thames to reach this southern location. Hence, by selecting an area between the two branches and above the forks for his future capital, Simcoe automatically avoided this difficulty.

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