The London and Middlesex

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The London and Middlesex Historical Society

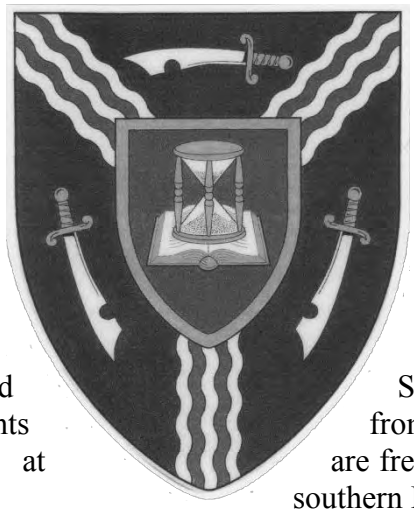
The London and Middlesex Historical Society was established in 1901 to promote awareness in the local heritage of London and Middlesex County. The aims of the Society are to encourage the research, discussion, presentation and publication of local history topics. The Society is affiliated with the Ontario 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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Front cover images:
Bottom left – Springbank Park Pavilion. London Public Library.
Bottom right –Railway exit to Richmond Street Dec.1931. Canadian Museum of Science & Technology.
Top left – Springbank Zoo. PUC annual report, 1923.
Top right – Mrs. McKillop in her McLaughlin-Buick. My Lady of the Car, *The Christmas Echo.*

Back cover images:
Top left – Banker's wife. Public Library and Archives, Ottawa.
Middle left – Springbank Park advertisement. *Free Press*, July 31, 1888, London Public Library.
Bottom left – Richmond Street north Dec. 1931. Canadian Museum of Science & Technology.
Right – Springbank Zoo. *The Free Press*, April 2, 1940.

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Volume 25, 2016

Editorial

This volume of *The Historian* looks at four topics about London. Coincidentally, two of the articles cover the fun history of Springbank Park, and the others about early London transportation.

Marvin Simner's article takes us on a trip down the Thames River to experience what London's first summer resort was like at Springbank. We learn how the park developed further thanks to other modes of transportation, and about the years where outside influences saw attendance dwindle. It certainly made me wish I was back in the eighteen-hundreds so I could enjoy such a fun excursion on a summer's day.

Dan Brock presents facts about early women drivers and automobile owners in London before World War I. The article and photos also read as a who's who of London, and many will recognize the surnames of some of London's founding families. The photos of women at the wheel during London's early days is a unique look at the history of this city and it's exciting to imagine both sexes having the opportunity to take part in automobile races around the city!

We're also taken on a tour of the Springbank Zoo by Catherine McEwan. During its infancy, the zoo grew slowly, but once London had its zoo the animals seemed to arrive quickly, sometimes two by two! Even the animals themselves have their stories, and it's hard not to become attached to the cute characters that took up residence at the Springbank Zoo. Whether you remember the animals of London's first menagerie or riding the carousel as a child, this article offers insight into one of London's most unique bygone attractions.

Mike Rice reveals that before the term "subway" was commonly used for rail transport underneath cities, the term was actually understood to mean a road going under a railway. When London decided to build its first subways a vast amount of collaboration was required between the City of London, the Grand Trunk Railway and the Canadian National Railway. An even greater amount of power went into the construction projects, bringing in powerful equipment to keep the subways on schedule. When the project was finished, not only did the new infrastructure improve the flow of traffic in the downtown core, but it also made the rail crossings safer for all involved, reducing the number of accidents and making our city safer for generations to come.

In working with each of the authors on this volume of the *Historian* I am inspired and appreciative of the detailed research conducted during the process. The dedication to each topic provides us with a better understanding of London's history, and unearths unique pieces of the past which allow us to learn more about our city. Thank you to Mike, Catherine, Dan and Marvin for their work on these fascinating articles, their diligence in giving me copies of every visual scrap (since they know I love photos and ephemera), and especially for their help in answering all my questions for this volume of the *Historian*. We hope you enjoy it!

Roxanne Lutz,
Editor

Guidelines for Authors

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

All correspondence regarding editorial matters should be addressed to:

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Manuscripts should be approximately 2,000 to 4,000 words, double-spaced and submitted electronically using Microsoft Word. Articles of longer length should be vetted with the publisher before submission.

A cover letter should be included with each submission, stating:

a) that the manuscript is not and will not be under concurrent consideration by another journal (publication by the author at a later date remains the right of the author);
b) that all co-authors have read and approved of the submission; and
c) any relevant permissions for use of images submitted if not in the public domain.

If used, illustrations and or photographs should accompany the manuscript. When possible, documents should be provided electronically, at a quality level no less than 300dpi. It is preferable for publication permissions to be obtained by the author, however when necessary the Society will cover the cost of illustration reproduction at the recommendation of the Editor.

Captions should be included for photographs and illustrations submitted, either within the manuscript or at the end of the article. Caption information should include the date, photographer or artist and if known the source and any credit information.

London's First Summer Resort

The Waterworks Region in Springbank Park

Marvin L. Simner

During the late 1800s the Waterworks region immediately surrounding the pumphouse in Springbank Park had become an entertainment mecca where throngs of Londoners would gather on spring and summer weekends and holidays. Prior to the development of this area, a common destination for those who wished to spend time away from home was Port Stanley, sometimes referred to as the "Canadian Saratoga". The Port could easily be reached by rail since the Great Western Railway as well as the London and Port Stanley Railway typically offered regular rail service on weekends as well as a special excursion train on the Queen's Birthday and Dominion Day. With the beautification of the Waterworks, however, an attempt was made to entice the citizens of London to remain at home rather than depart for the Port. This was accomplished, at least in part, by referring either to the Waterworks or to Springbank in newspaper articles and in advertisements as "London's Summer Resort," and occasionally even as "Ontario's Great Summer Resort."

The purpose of this article is to trace the rise and fall in popularity of the Waterworks region at Springbank, which spanned the years 1879 through 1897. To accomplish this goal it is helpful to divide this 18-year period into three distinct phases.

The first phase, which only lasted two years (1879 through 1881), was associated with steamship travel down the Thames River from docks at the foot of Dundas Street to the Waterworks. The second phase started with the Victoria Day Disaster on May 24, 1881, continued until 1895, and was marked by a decline in the public's use of the region. The third and final phase began in 1895/96 with the advent of the London Street Railway system and the growth of many popular activities and events in the Waterworks that appealed not only to adults but to teenagers and children. This phase, however, also only lasted about two years for reasons explored further in this article. In the aftermath of this final phase a larger more diversified entertainment complex emerged to the west of the Waterworks, which then became London's next summer resort.


SPRINGBANK,
NEAR LONDON.
Ontario's Great Summer Resort
NOW OPEN FOR THE SEASON.
Everything in first-class order. Refreshment rooms under the management of Mr. J. Cruickshank, of the American House. Spend your holidays at Springbank.
F2tuts-tf J. CRUICKSHANK.

From the *London Free Press*, July 31, 1888, 6: 4.
Courtesy of the London Room, London Public Library.

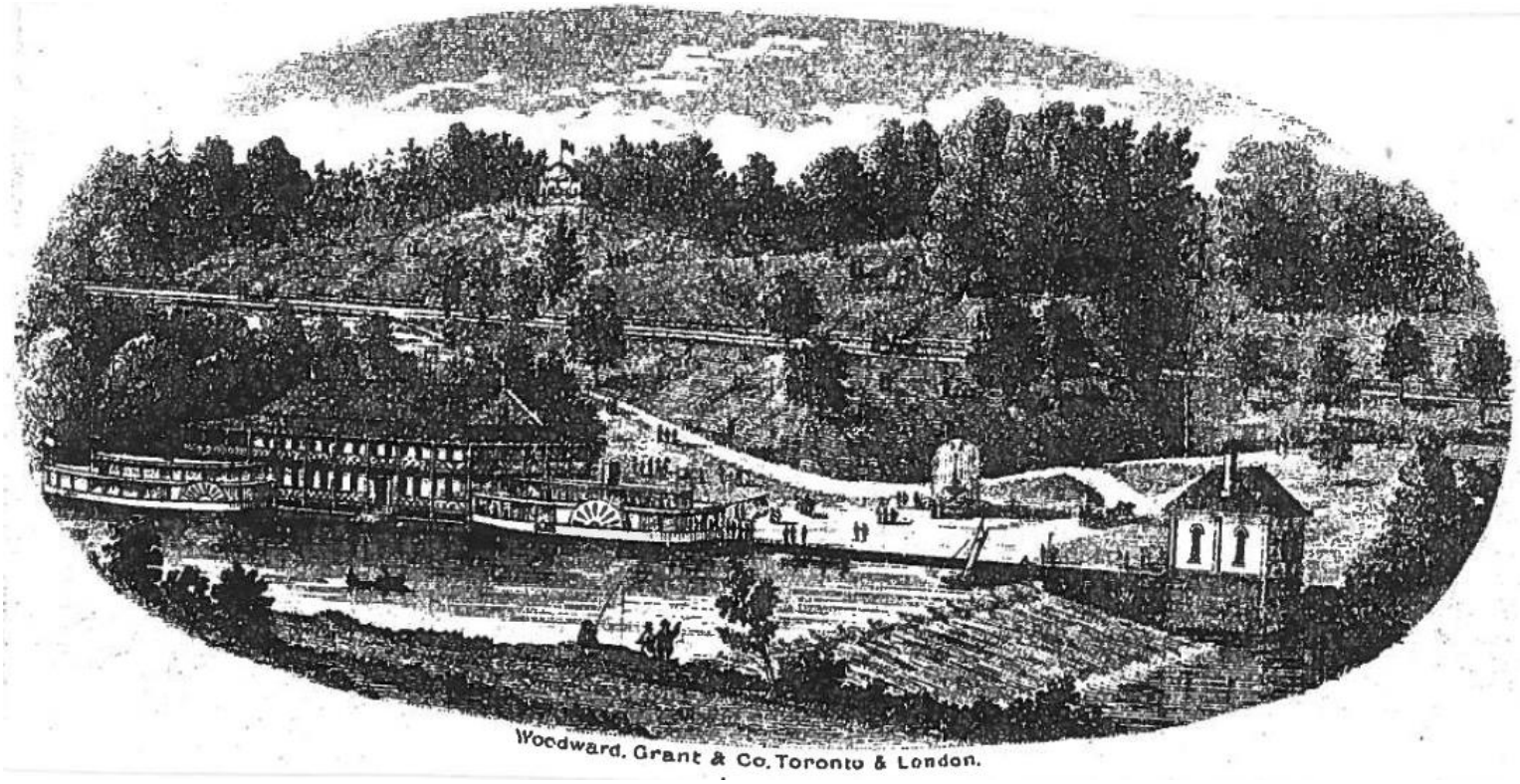
Phase I: Steamship Travel

With the completion of the pumphouse in 1879 (for the controversy and events that led to the need for the pumphouse see Simner[1]) the London Water Commissioners provided a thoroughly landscaped area around the pumphouse referred to as the Waterworks region or the Waterworks Park.

This region, which extended from the river to Pipe Line Road (known today as Springbank Drive) contained not only the pumphouse and a number of related structures, but also picnic grounds and a building north of the pumphouse known as Hotel Neebing, which housed a popular dance pavilion.

> *Every accommodation is provided at the Neebing Hotel, as it has been named, and the lovers of the Terpsichorean art (dancing) will be able to disport themselves to their heart's content in the spacious room which has been set apart for them.*[2]

The Neebing was managed by Conklin and Moore,[3] who were part owners of the Tecumseh House in downtown London.[4] The illustration below shows an artist's rendition of the Waterworks region with Hotel Neebing on the far left, the pumphouse on the far right, the Waterworks Dam in the foreground and Pipe Line Road in the background.



From the cover of the First Annual Report of the Board of Water Commissioners (1879).
Courtesy of the London Room, London Public Library.

The spacious room in the Neebing, mentioned above, measured approximately 40 x 50 feet and was on the first floor together with a bar. Although the building was referred to as a hotel, whether it actually contained rooms for overnight accommodations is unknown. The few existing descriptions contain no mention of such rooms and since the second floor was "wholly devoted to the refreshment room and a counter for refreshments"[5] overnight accommodations would seem unlikely. Despite the lack of these accommodations the Neebing appears to have been an extremely popular destination for many Londoners in that its balconies were said to be crowded with viewers when, for example in 1880, a regatta was held on the Thames.[6]

In addition to picnic grounds, dance facilities and other forms of entertainment, the Waterworks region also contained another nearby feature that attracted many visitors. East of the pumphouse and at the base of Hungerford Hill, known today as Reservoir Hill, a stairway which is still visible, led to an observatory at the top of the hill that offered a panoramic view of the river and the surrounding countryside.

To celebrate holidays Londoners could visit the Waterworks, by horse or carriage, by walking along Pipe Line Road, or by traveling down the Thames River on any of several steamships that made the journey. The first steamship to navigate this route was the *Forest City*, launched on April 18, 1879, and owned by the Thames Navigation Company under the command of sailing master Thomas Wastie.[7] The second steamship, launched on May 19, 1879, was the *Enterprise*, which belonged to the London and Waterworks Line.[8] On May 26th a third steamship, the *Princess Louise*, was also launched by the Thames Navigation Company.[9]

The *Princess Louise* and the *Forest City* were scheduled to leave every hour from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. during the season with stops at Woodland Park and the Waterworks.[10] In addition to providing transportation, and as an enticement to travel down the Thames, both steamers offered musical entertainment throughout their voyages.

Would these inducements, however, be sufficient to overcome the ever present desire to visit Port Stanley instead of the Waterworks? This question became particularly vexing for the city because, in the spring of 1879 when the Thames steamers were launched, a new steamer was also launched at the Port that attracted considerable attention in London.

> *A special train left this city (London) yesterday afternoon (April 3) for Port Stanley, having on board a large number of citizens, the occasion being the launching of a new pleasure steamer. For a long time the want of a first-class pleasure boat at the Canadian Saratoga has been felt, and the Ellison Bros, and Mr. Thomas Fraser determined to build (such) a steamer that would be credit to all concerned…It is the intention of the proprietors to run the boat in connection with the L & P.S.R, leaving her dock, near the station of the arrival of excursion trains…As there will be a large space on deck devoted to dancing and as food (along with) music is to be supplied, many will probably seek recreation in this manner. For those who prefer to rest there will be provision made, a large number of portable beds being provided. A ladies cabin is to be fitted up in first-class style,*

> *and all the other arrangements in proportion. It is also intended to have frequent moonlight excursions, special trains being arranged from London to St. Thomas for that purpose. A saloon, under the management of Mr. Thomas Fraser, will be provided on board, and to all who know that popular young gentleman, the bare announcement will of itself be sufficient.*[18]

Despite the enticing nature of Port Stanley, during the forthcoming holiday season a large number of Londoners did indeed decide to remain in town. In commenting on what happened during the Dominion Day celebrations that July, the *London Free Press* noted that only 947 people traveled to Port Stanley, whereas approximately 4,000 traveled down river on the local steamers. Thus, the financial investment by the city in the Waterworks region appeared to be quite successful.

> *The Princess Louise and Enterprise (during their maiden voyages) were crowded from their first trip in the morning until their last one at nine o'clock. So thronged were the decks of the first-named craft during two of her trips in the afternoon that many citizens were debarred from participating in a sail. It is estimated that fully 4,000 persons visited Woodland Park and Springbank during the day, and we are glad to say that no accident occurred to mar the harmony.*[19]

In spite of this initial success, however, it soon became evident to those who elected to sail down the Thames that they would need to contend with several potential difficulties. The first difficulty resulted from the nature of the river itself. Although the steamers when fully loaded only required a depth of about 6-7 inches to remain afloat, because the water level in the Thames was often quite low and the river had a number of sandbars along with other obstacles, it was not uncommon for the steamers to experience navigational problems. For instance, when an early attempt to launch the *Enterprise* took place on May 9th, it "ran into and stuck on a sandbar (as soon as) her stern reached the water."[11] Later when a successful trip occurred the captain was given considerable credit "…due to (his) foresight in marking all (the) dangerous places on the voyage (in advance of his departure)."[12] As another illustration, consider what happened to the *Princess Louise* on her maiden voyage when she encountered Griffith's Dam, which was partially submerged and located near what is today the Wonderland Road bridge over the Thames.

> *The excursionists down the river yesterday did not have an unmixed pleasure. The boat was too crowded on one of its trips and became stuck in (Griffith's)dam and it was four o'clock this morning before the last load of the excursionists reached the city…Over a hundred walked up to the city, but the large majority took things as they found them and made the most of it. Navigation on the Thames has not yet reached a state of perfection.*[13]

This accident at the dam is particularly interesting because according to a newspaper account that appeared on May 20th, which was six days before the *Princess Louise* sailed, the placement of boards on top of the Waterworks Dam next to the pumphouse was "… expected to raise the water (level) three feet six inches above the elevation of Griffith's dam…"[14]

Therefore, it was anticipated that the *Princess Louise* should not have run into the dam since, as mentioned above, when fully loaded the ship was said to require only about 7 inches of depth below the water line to clear any obstacles that it encountered. Nevertheless the *Princess Louise* did collide with the dam and had to be removed in order to resume its voyage. While an earlier attempt had been made to destroy the dam through the use of dynamite, the attempt proved unsuccessful.[15]

A second and possibly more significant difficulty surfaced the following year with the launch of the *Victoria* on April 29th, which was also owned by Captain Wastie. Here the problem centered on rivalries that, on occasion, would erupt between the captains of the different steamships. On the Queen's birthday that year, a fierce competition took place between the *Victoria* and the *Forest City* near the site of Griffith's Dam.

> *It is to be regretted that the spirit of rivalry between those in charge of the Forest City and Victoria was manifested in such a manner as to alarm the passengers and even imperil their lives. It was too marked to be called an accident and too flagrant to be treated with silence. On going down the river the two vessels were side by side, and being of about equal speed remained so for some little time…The master of Victoria claims that the master of the Forest City deliberately forced the Forest City on to the Victoria and crowded the later boat on to the shore. Unfortunately a large tree overhung the steamer, and its big branches raked the covering of the upper deck, terribly alarming the passengers, who received a yet ruder shock when the vessel struck the shore…Several ladies fainted, and a scene of wild disorder ensued on board the Victoria.*
>
> *That, however, was not the end of it. When the Forest City was again returning to the Waterworks the delayed Victoria…gave the signal for the Forest City to go to the left…this signal should have been obeyed but it was not done in time…and a collision was the result. The passengers got a bad shaking up, and some were thrown from their seats…as the helms where turned one went ashore on each side of the river… The murmuring, which was loud and long, began to grow into profanity when the steamer got off, reached the dock, unloaded and took on one of the maddest crowds that ever bought excursion tickets.*[16]

This level of rivalry between captains had also surfaced on May 25, 1880 and then again that September when the *Forest City* collided once more with the *Victoria*. Although some claimed that the latter collision was accidental, others felt it was intentional.[17] In either case, due to the competitive nature of the captains, the overall safety of steamship travel down the Thames was always of concern. The final challenge to the safety of travel, however, took place on May 24, 1881, with the sinking of the *Victoria* and the loss of some 200 lives, including Thomas Wastie's son Alfred.[20]

Phase II: The Victoria Disaster

In 1881 the boating season began with considerable promise. The Neebing was repainted, several extensions were added, and the grounds surrounding the hotel were said to be "in apple pie order."[21] In addition, the *Victoria*, which was originally built and owned by Captain Wastie, was acquired by the Thames Navigation Company which also owned the *Forest City* and the *Princess Louise*. All three steamers were removed from dry dock around May 16th and were made ready through extensive repair for the tourist season which was to begin with the Queen's Birthday celebrations on the 24th of the month. Over $400 was expended on the *Victoria* to repair her machinery, a small cabin was erected on the upper deck to accommodate the ladies, all of her seats were repainted, and her boiler was "shifted five feet forward….to give her considerable additional speed."[21] The *Princess Louise* had her cylinders bored and along with the *Forest City* was thoroughly caulked. A fourth steamboat, the *Dodger*, was also launched "as a tug, in case any of the boats get stranded."[22]

Despite the care that had been taken to ensure the safe operation of all the steamboats, it was on the *Victoria's* return trip from Springbank to the Dundas Street dock in the late afternoon of May 24th that the disaster took place.

> *It was about 5 o'clock in the afternoon when the ill-fated Victoria reached Springbank on her last trip. Both the upper and lower decks were crowded, and a large number of pleasure seekers remained on board to return on the same boat. As is usually the case at that hour, an immense crown was waiting at the wharf for the arrival of the steamer. Everyone was anxious to secure a place, and in a few moments every portion of standing or sitting room was fully occupied.*
>
> *James Drennan, in the employ of the Advertiser, was on the upper deck when the Victoria capsized. He gave the following account of the dreaded disaster:*
>
> *About half-past five we were coming very slow by Griffith's dam, and I went up to Captain Rankin and remarked: "You have a big crowd to-day, Captain."*
>
> *"Yes, I couldn't keep the people off. They would crowd on, although I told them there were two more boats coming after."*
>
> *I left him then and had hardly turned away when I noticed the water rushing in down below over the bottom deck. As I looked down the stair-case I noticed the water ankle deep down below. The crowd seemed excited and kept rushing from one side to the other. Captain Ranking told them repeatedly to stand still and not crowd so much to the side. The boat now commenced rocking and the people all rushed to the north side, when the boat went over on her side and a terrific crash followed, the whole of the upper deck coming crashing around us.*
>
> *The Princess Louise arrived soon after the catastrophe and moored against the north shore and close to the wreck. A gangway was projected from her deck to the shore, and at about 7 o'clock the bodies, as fast as they were*

> *received, were ranged in sad array on the upper deck (which) was soon covered….to such an extent that in some instances the bodies of children and infants were placed on top of the adults corpses. The scene on the upper deck was a sight which sent a shudder through the spectators…*[23]

A coroner's inquest was held in June.[24] Although the cause of the sinking was never fully explained, local historian Ken McTaggart cites a number factors that may have been associated with the disaster.[25] For example, the majority of witnesses testified that the boat was overcrowded and that many of the passengers seemed to enjoy rocking the boat which could have caused it to capsize. It was also suggested in the *Free Press* that a pre-existing hole in the hull may have led the boat to become "water-logged" which in turn may have been responsible for the sinking.[26] Regardless of the cause, it is important to note that following the disaster no further ads appeared in either newspaper for the remainder of the year concerning steamship transportation to the Waterworks region, nor was there any mention of the region itself. In fact, the only celebration that took place in London that summer over Dominion Day occurred on the grounds of the Mount Hope Orphan's Asylum attached to St. Joseph's Convent on the southwest corner of Richmond and Grosvenor.[27]

Little is known about the Waterworks during the years that followed the disaster since the park was rarely cited in the *Free Press* or the *Advertiser* as a place to spend either the Queen's Birthday or Dominion Day. While picnics did occur there from time to time, how many Londoners actually visited the park is not clear since, according to London's mayor, Edmund Allan Meredith who visited in May, 1882 and whose father was the oldest victim of the disaster of the previous year, both the *Princess Louise* and the *Forest City* were "lying high and dry on the side of the river, the sun warping their timbers, opening their seams, and fast hastening their decay."[28] Despite the absence of the steamers, there was at least some boat travel down the Thames that year because the *Advertiser* reported that a few persons who visited Woodland Cemetery, did so by boat.[29] Whether this was by row boat or some other craft, however, is unknown since it was possible to rent different types of boats from several boat houses at the foot of Dundas Street. There was, of course, always the option of walking to the Waterworks along Pipe Line Road as well as traveling there by horse or carriage.

It is also worth noting that while this region was rarely mentioned in the press between 1882 and 1887 both papers frequently listed many other sites within the city that Londoners could visit during the two holidays. For example, on the Queen's Birthday in 1883, the *Advertise*r listed "a military review between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. on Carling's Farm (site of the present Wolseley Barracks then outside of London) followed by a march through the city via Adelaide, Dundas and Richmond Streets."[30] In addition, there was a cricket match on the Asylum grounds (north of Dundas Street and east of the present Highbury Avenue) at 10 a.m. and at Tecumseh Park (now Labatt Memorial Park) there was a baseball game followed by lacrosse at 3 p.m. On Dominion Day there was the annual picnic held at the Mount Hope Orphan Asylum.[31] Both papers also mentioned many outside rail trips as well as trips to Port Stanley where "Londoners could enjoy the beach, board steamers for tours of Lake Erie or visit the Fraser House which featured a band and liberal rates to families who purpose boarding at this Hotel."[32]

No doubt these other excursions had once again become popular following the demise of steamer transportation down the Thames.

Because the Waterworks was seldom used throughout this period, to encourage its use, in the latter part of 1887 the *Free Press* ran several editorials urging the resumption of river transportation to the park.

> *…When shall a steamboat be again put on the Thames River. It is too bad that the citizens are not able as of yore to enjoy a sail down the Thames and spend a day at the Waterworks or Chestnut Park as it is called. Thousands used to visit the park, but since the accident it has lapsed into its old obscurity.*[33]

Possibly in response to the editorials, in May, 1888, Captain David Foster launched two steamboats, the *City of London* and the *Thames*, that would depart from Dundas and once more carry passengers down river to the park.

> *At 10 o'clock a.m. (on May 25th) the decks of the City of London were freighted with a large number of the more youthful part of the community, who were quickly, safely and pleasantly conveyed to Springbank…The boat returned, and about noon she was again merrily plowing her way through the water with another consignment of the pleasure seekers…The ticket seller (at the dock) soon reached the limit (300 passengers), and the gates were promptly closed by Captain Foster, who was determined to keep within the prescribed number of passengers which he is permitted to carry on one trip, leaving several hundred spectators behind, who were compelled to await her return It is roughly estimated that Captain Foster carried upwards of 900 visitors to Springbank during the day…since the inception of the City of London (Springbank) promises to be the formidable rival of Post Stanley as a much patronized pleasure resort.*[34]

Unfortunately, however, it seems that this promise was never fully realized. Although in 1888 both steamers left the Dundas Street dock at 10 a.m., 3 p.m. and 8 p.m., featured bands that played during all of the trips, and the Neebing was now under new management, during the years that followed the launch of the two new steamers there was very little mention of the Waterworks region in either newspaper. In May, 1889, the only reference to the park was in a column in the *Free Press* devoted to the Queen's birthday: "At home it may be stated that Capt. Foster's staunch steamers will run to Springbank at intervals throughout the day." Only one sentence below this brief announcement the following additional information appeared: "An excursion train will leave at 6 a.m. for Windsor and Detroit. Another will be run by the G.T.R. to Port Stanley at 10 a.m. and at 10:30 a.m. the (baseball teams) the Tecumsehs and Rochesters will contest for supremacy on Tecumseh Park…(then) In the evening Prof. Hand will exhibit his fireworks on the Base Ball Park and "Pete" Baker the comedian, will occupy the Grand Opera House…"[35] By not referring to either the Neebing or the picnic area in the Waterworks, and instead by emphasizing these other locations, it would seem that Londoners probably were not electing to visit the Waterworks as long as it was possible to go elsewhere. In May 1892 the *Advertiser* even used the following words to summarize the difference in traffic flow to the Waterworks vs Port Stanley.

> *Capt. Foster's boats plied between the city and Springbank for the first time this season on Tuesday. Owing to the cold weather the patronage was smaller than usual…(On the other hand) the Port Stanley excursion season (also) opened on Tuesday. About eight carloads went from the city. Had the weather been fine the crowd would doubtless have been much larger.*[36]

Thus, both papers were informing their readers not only of other places to visit and enjoy aside from the Waterworks but that there was a marked willingness on the part of Londoners to frequent these other places instead of the Waterworks. Perhaps this is why between 1889 and 1894 the only mention of the steamers in the *Free Press* were brief statements in a column labeled "Amusements." In fact, by 1894 passenger trips along the river to the Waterworks had declined sufficiently to prompt Captain Foster to withdraw the *City of London* from active service. Although the *Thames* continued to run for several more years, it too was withdrawn in 1899, and purposely set on fire by Captain Foster near the Waterworks Dam, where it sunk.[37]

McTaggart has suggested that the reason for the demise in the use of the Waterworks may have resulted from "swimming becoming a popular pastime and Port Stanley's waters were not polluted as badly as the Thames."[38] There is, however, another possible reason, namely, hooliganism. Without the crowds that had frequented the park prior to the *Victoria* disaster, young street toughs were able to have a dominant influence in this region and their presence would often frighten others away.

> *One very strong objection citizens have had to going to Springbank on a holiday or public picnic is the conduct of a number of young toughs, who attempt to win glory for themselves by getting drunk and using profane and insulting language in the presence of ladies. Yesterday half a dozen of these young hoodlums conducted themselves in a most unseemly manner, and this morning warrants were issued for their arrest. The majority of them are the sons of respectable parents, but this is not their first offence, and if Spring-bank is to become the popular resort which its natural advantages so pre-eminently fit it for, the Magistrates should teach them a severe lesson when they are brought before them. High Constable (Henry) Schram has determined to put his foot on this thing in the future, and pleasure-seekers may rest assured that they will not be troubled on this score again.*[39]

Fun fact!

In 1888 steamships left a dock at the foot of Dundas Street at 10 a.m, 3 and 8 p.m. The last boat left Springbank to return to the downtown dock at 10 p.m. Round trips cost just 15 cents (our guess: $3.10 today!) A discount was offered for those with a large 'excursion party'. Music was played on board by the London South band. A trip up the Thames River to Springbank Park sounds like quite the outing for a summer day!

Phase III: The London Street Railway System

Despite the optimism that the Waterworks region initially enjoyed following the launch of the steamers, because of the many perils that soon became associated with river travel, the region never fully realized its potential and its subsequent decline was undoubtedly hastened owing to a growing lack of attendance. Then, in 1895/1896, in an effort to rejuvenate the region, City Council approved several bylaws that granted the London Street Railway System the right to construct an electric railway to run from downtown to Springbank. Specifically, the bylaws stated that the Railway could enter the Waterworks and operate for six months starting on the 15th of May and ending on the 15th of October, Sundays excluded, each year through 1925. Council also granted the Railway permission to give band concerts, firework displays, and other attractions "which shall receive the sanction in writing of the Commissioners…provided no charge is made to the public."[40]

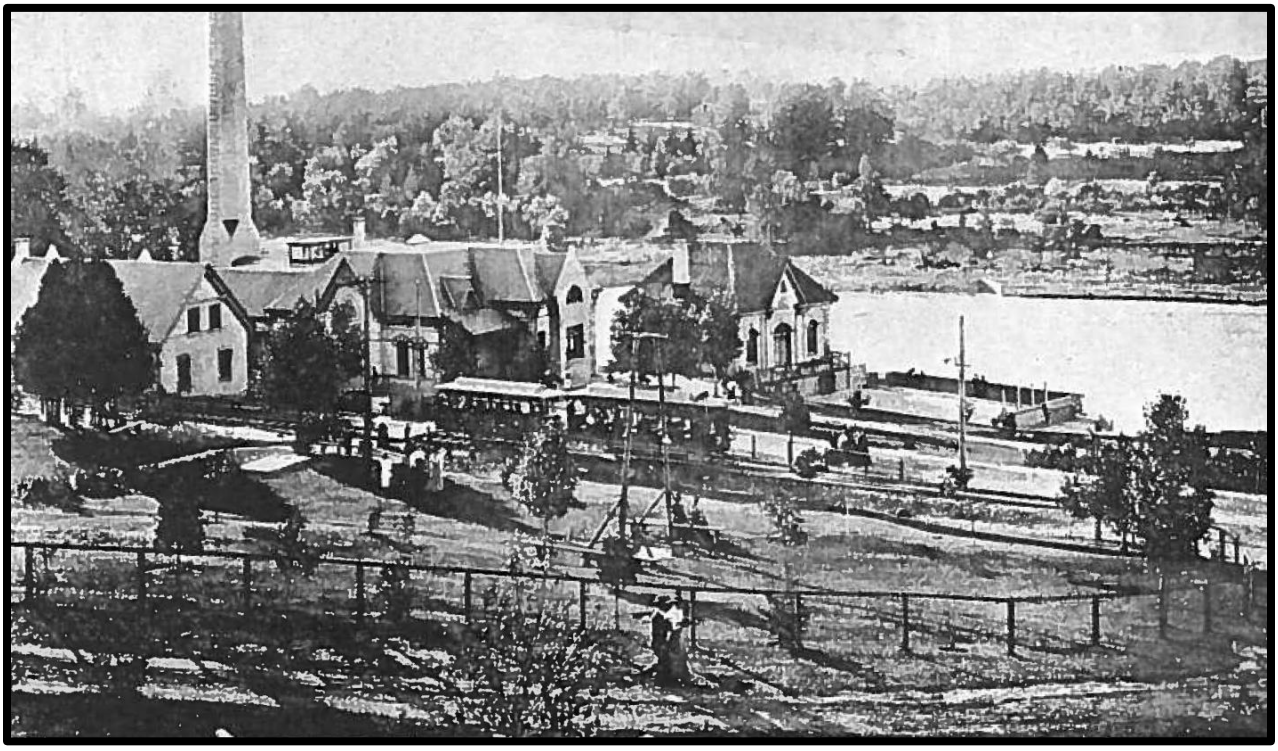
Needless to say, by including this last provision in the agreement, it was hoped that the Waterworks would once again become a destination worth visiting. The trains began to run on May 25, 1896, and it was estimated that between 10,000 and 12,000 people visited the region that first day. Providing the public with convenient transportation seemed to create the incentive needed to attend the Waterworks as the scheme was met with an overwhelming response. Unfortunately, however, although 25 cars were used to carry the passengers, "the trip was rarely made with anything like pleasure."[41]

> *The cars were always crowded to suffocation, every inch of space was occupied…As early as two o'clock in the afternoon fully 1,500 people, male and female, old and young were to be found at the different street corners between Dundas and Richmond and Thames street waiting patiently for the Springbank cars. No one in authority, at the points named, could satisfy their curiosity as to when these might be expected along to convey them to London's new summer resort. Fully an hour elapsed before the crowds were moved in a westerly direction and every car and trailer attached was densely packed with human freight. At 7:10 o'clock last night a reporter boarded a car labelled "Springbank Park" at the corner of Dundas and Richmond streets. Enough people were aboard to comfortably fill the seats, but as the street corner was passed room in the car became a scarce quantity. Ere long standing passengers had overflowed from the aisles in among seats; feet trampled on feet, clothes and millinery were despoiled and tempers were rapidly becoming ruffled. Soon Railway Street was reached, and the first troubles were speedily made to appear small. The car jumped the track, and repeated the trick three times before one hundred yards were covered…Passengers were ordered out of the cars, and climbed back again in the hope that it was for the last time. And after an hour had gone by, it really did prove a fact that the car was speeding "Springbackwards" … The conductor was on his second round by this time, and a murmur of disgust – sometimes a very audible murmur – greeted him at every turn.*

While the *Free Press* was sympathetic to the difficulties the company encountered during its first day of operation, nevertheless, the paper felt that the company's facilities needed to be substantially improved if the railway wished to deliver satisfactory service. No doubt the company was of a very similar mind; by mid-June it had clearly improved its service. In a brief announcement on June 18th the *Free Press* reported that "The Street Railway Company…carried 5,000 people to Spring-bank during yesterday and last evening, and landed them all safely in the city shortly after eleven o'clock."[42] Then, approximately two weeks later, and as an expression of the manager's overall confidence in his system, he was quoted in the *Free Press* as saying that "the citizens (of London) should not go abroad to spend their money. Let them stay in the city, board a car, and go where all the attraction will be – at Springbank."[43]

To illustrate the manager's point, shortly after the railway was granted permission to enter the park considerable construction had taken place which was amply documented in the same *Free Press* article. A railway platform was built in front of the pumphouse and the collecting pond nearest the pumphouse had been enclosed and a promenade was placed around it. On the south side of the pond there were "two hundred and fifty incandescent lamps while eight 300-candle power lamps were at the top of a 65-foot pole to form a tower light of sufficient strength to illuminate the whole ground."

In addition to these features, much thought also was given to the need for appropriate entertainment throughout the Dominion Day weekend. A concert by the Musical Society Band was scheduled for the afternoon and evening, and there was to be a "base ball match, aquatic sports, lime-light views, dancing, and a crowd, which, in itself, will be an attraction."



The Waterworks Region, circa 1896. Courtesty of London Room, London Public Library.

All of this was followed that evening by fireworks. Perhaps the most electrifying entertainment though was a "high diver from New York, who will make perilous drops from a high elevation, and turn somersaults en route" along with a wire-walker who was scheduled to cross the Thames starting from the top of the 65-foot pole mentioned above. Because many of the activities had been scheduled to reappear throughout the summer, the park was now finally in a position to offer substantial competition to Port Stanley.

As a further marketing strategy, the following year the Railway opened the Park Theatre on the Waterworks grounds north of the hotel. [44]

> *(Although) the building is not a particularly prepossessing one viewed from the exterior, but within it is charmingly comfortable…it is so constructed as to prevent injurious draughts, while all the cool air that the park can furnish will be found within…. The stage is a commodious one, having dimensions of 20 x 40 feet, with an opening of 26 feet. The scenery is new, and the stage is fitted with a drop curtain…there will be two performances — one in the afternoon and the second at 8:30 in the evening.*[45]

Of the various features that the park contained at this point, one of the most popular was the theatre which provide a complete set of highly entertaining vaudeville acts.

> *The new summer theatre was very largely patronized and the performances gave very general satisfaction. Manager [Albert E.] Roote was careful to provide a thoroughly clean and entertaining list of specialties…Creago and Loring were mirth-provoking in negro melodies, songs and dances. Emery and Miss Marlowe, in a bit of nonsense brought down the house. Mack and Elliott, in the portrayal of domestic difficulties unhappily found in some house-holds, were very good. Carr and Newell, in the policeman and tramp act, were also good…Miss Rankin, the star comedienne, was present in the evening, and her songs and dances called forth a number of encores.* [45]

With all of these activities in the park now available to the public, it is not surprising that on the Queen's Birthday in 1897 it was estimated that 10,000 people traveled by rail to the park.

> *The different street corners between Thames street and the route of the Springbank cars were thronged from one o'clock until half-past three with crowds await-ing transportation to the new pleasure resort, and not infrequently the cars were filled before Richmond street was reached…The wonder is that none of the more daring excursionists were not fatally injured. Dozens of them were hanging on to the railing of the cars unmindful of the fact that the space between the cars and the beams on York street and Victoria bridges are not sufficient to admit of a person standing in the position they occupied without endangering life.*[45]

Despite the theatre's popularity, however, and solely in anticipation of the moral decay that the theatre's vaudevillian productions were likely to bring about, the theatre was strongly condemned by the city clergy even before it opened. On May 3, 1897 the following article appeared in the *Free Press.*

> *For some years Rev. Richard Hobbs, pastor at Askin Street, was a farmer, and yesterday he announced that he would go back to the farm and chop wood if he thought his preaching against the evils of the day had no effect. People might say it was none of his business to preach against the pro-posed theatre at Springbank, but he could not agree with them. He was here to give a warning wherever he saw it needful, and he intended to do it. He repeated his assertion that the majority of the people of London were, he believed, on the side of the devil…It does seem too bad that our beautiful summer resort should be thus desecrated. Yes that is the word I am going to use in relation to the perverted use to be made out of our lovely resort…now with its theatre and dancing pavilion, with its evils and evil tendency to all who surrender themselves to its fascinations, the charm of Springbank is gone forever.*[46]

Shortly after Rev. Hobbs made this statement, a very similar statement was voiced by Bishop Maurice Scollard Baldwin and Dean George M. Innes of the Huron Diocese, as well as by the Methodist Ministerial Association of London.[47] In view of such strong reactions, it is perhaps not surprising that no further performances were held in the theatre. What is surprising, though, is that on August 7, 1897, the building was totally destroyed by fire! While the cause of the fire was never determined, the *Free Press* claimed that it was probably the work of an arsonist.

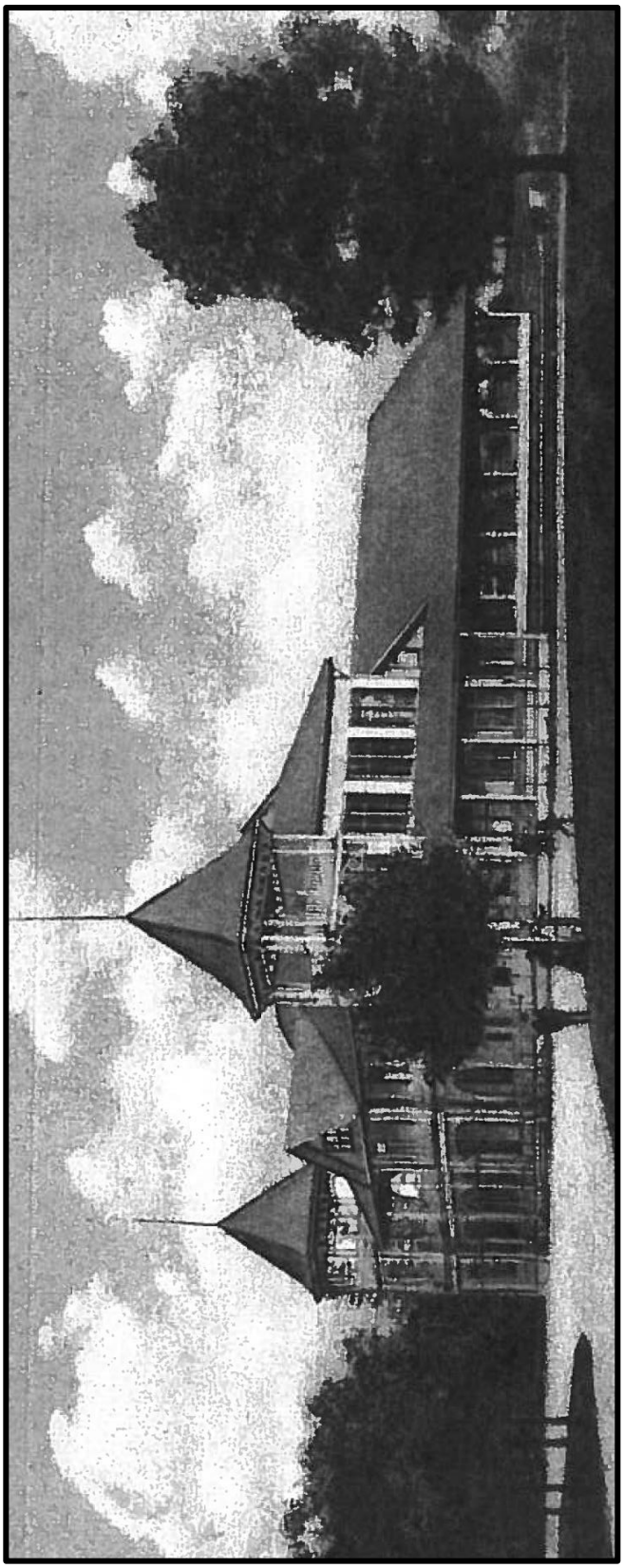
> *Hardly a stick is left of the building that gave pulpits and church boards a theme for discussion all spring…No effort was made to put out the fire. When it was first discovered, the whole building was ablaze….the theatre was a complete wreck. Even the floor is burn-ed up, and the offices adjoining went up with the rest. The piano and stage scenery was also consumed…*[48]

Then on December 30, 1897 the hotel met the same fate. "The two-story frame hotel on the Water-works property at Springbank was burned to the ground be-tween eight and nine o'clock last night, entailing a loss to the city of $3,500 ….The cause of the fire is unknown but it is probably the work of a firebug."[49]

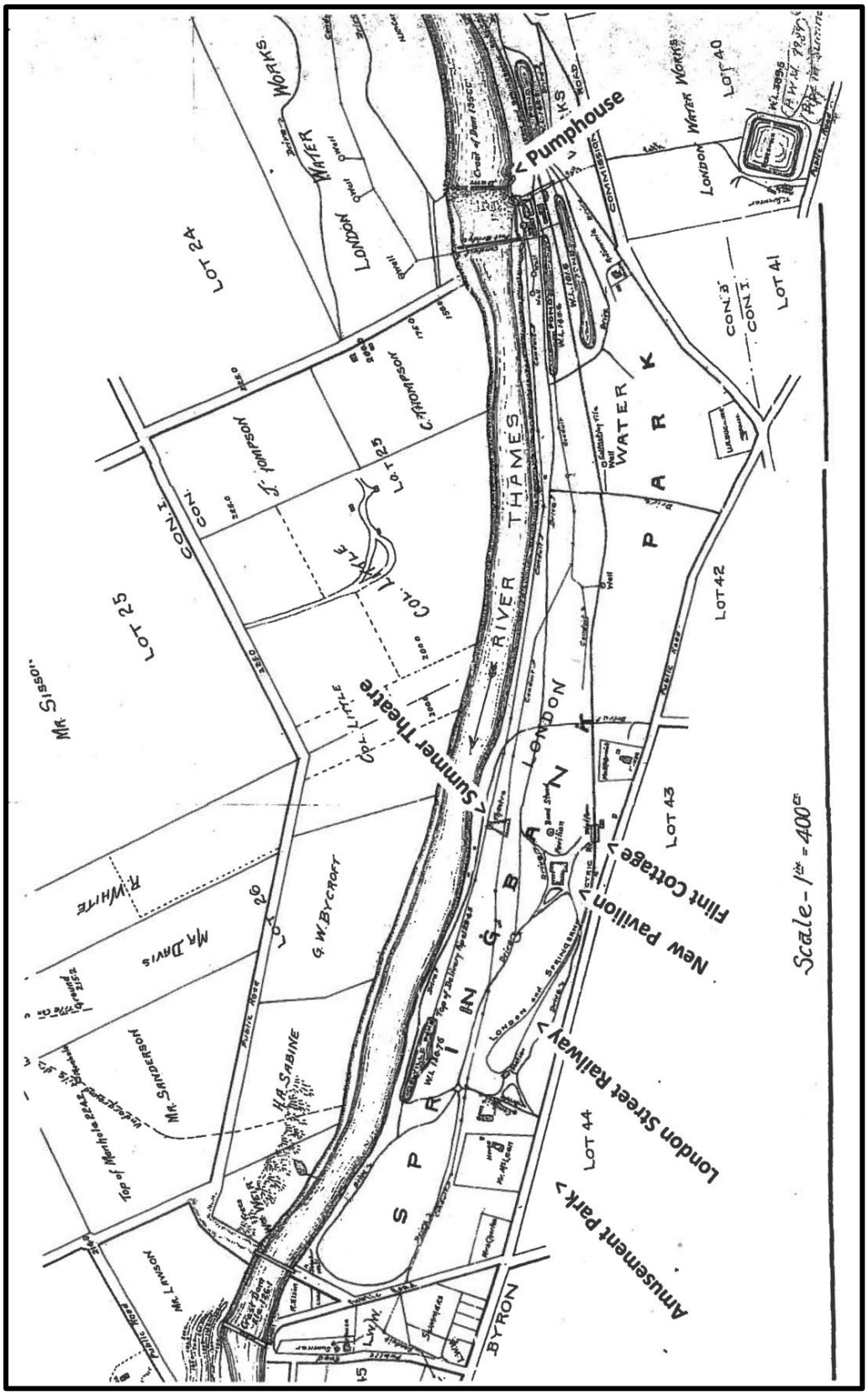
Aftermath

With both the theatre and the hotel gone, little remained to hold the public's interest in the Waterworks region. To take its place a new entertainment complex, referred to in the *Free Press* as a "resort second to none in Canada," shortly emerged elsewhere in Springbank as the result of a further bylaw approved by City Council on May 21, 1896. This new bylaw granted the Railway Company the right to lay additional tracks far to the west of the pumphouse.[50] Within two years following the passage of the bylaw, the Company erected the pavilion illustrated on the opposite page which opened to the public in time for the Dominion Day celebrations.[51]

The site for the new pavilion in relation to the pumphouse is shown on the map on page 21. This site may have been selected because of its proximity to a nearby stone cottage, built by Robert Flint in the 1850s, which was remodeled to serve as a railway platform for those who wished to visit the pavilion.[52] The map also shows the location of the railway tracks along with a new summer theatre, and an amusement park, both of which are described on page 22.



Springbank Pavilion. Courtesy of the London Room, London Public Library.



Springbank Park, circa 1925. Courtesy of the Planning Department, City of London.

Although the pavilion was not officially opened until July 1st, the resort itself received high praise in a lengthy article in the *Free Press* on May 24, 1898, under the following headline.

> ***In the River Park London has a rare resort***
>
> *Springbank was never prettier than just now. As the seasons grow into one another the beautiful river park becomes more charming. The annual expenditure of time and labor, of money and skill are combining to make of Springbank a place of resort second to none in Canada. When the new pavilion is completed the crowds will gather at the railway terminus…The west end of the park affords greater space and is distant from the pump house or other sign of life other than nature's own. The base ball park will be close by, and the games, the fireworks displays and the special attractions of whatever sort will be here. The new pavilion will of itself be an attraction, both as regards its architecture and the protection and conveniences it will afford. There will be up-to-date catering by the lessees.*[53]

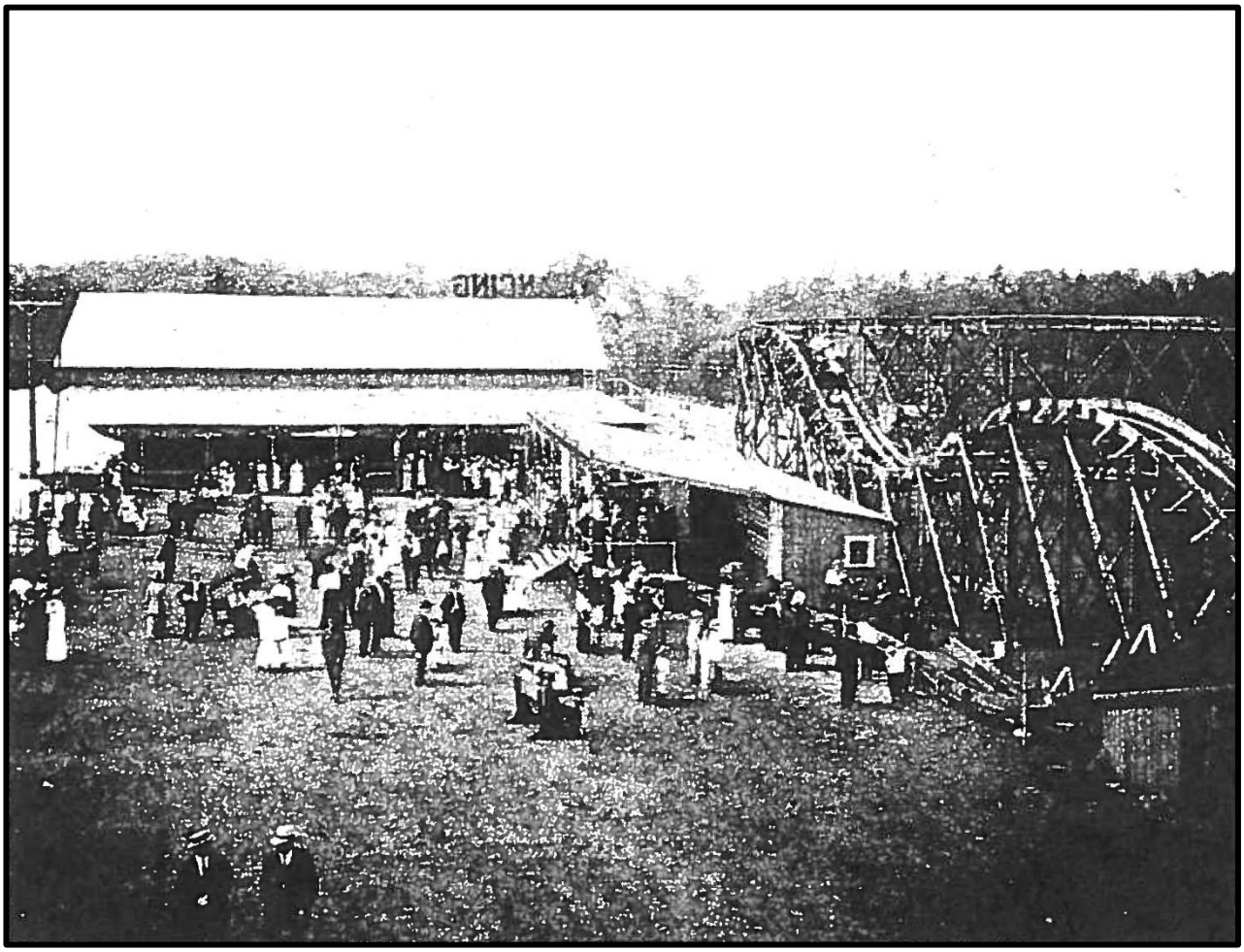
Throughout the Queen's Birthday as well as Dominion Day that year the crowds were indeed immense.

> *(On May 25th) Trolley cars ran only eight minutes apart during the afternoon and on even closer time after darkness had set in, yet there were throngs in waiting for every car. It is estimated that from 8,000 to 10,000 people journeyed to the park on the holiday…There were many private parties, each holding a picnic on its own account, yet practically making one great picnic. The ponds, the pumps, the reservoir and all the points of special interest had their quota of visitors, but the greatest number spent their time at the west end…Several games of base ball and minor sports were conducted on the grounds. The band of the Musical Society gave an afternoon and an evening concert, and both were very greatly enjoyed. The throng of park visitors in the evening were also treated to a very fine display of fireworks by the Prof. Hand Co….The evening's programme was concluded at 9:30 o'clock, but the crowd did not all return to the city until some time later.*[54]
>
> *(On July 1st) The Street Railway Company's lines were patronized to the full extent of the carrying capacity of available cars. Springbank was visited by thousands of citizens, with their families, and a constant procession of cars moved rapidly to and fro on the double-tracked line to the beautiful river park. The new pavilion was informally opened, and gave general satisfaction. At night it presented a pretty sight, with a couple of hundred electric lamps blazing along the promenade verandahs. Afternoon and evening the Seventh Band discoursed music from the upper promenade, and the concerts were much enjoyed. Many people spent the whole day at the Park, others the afternoon, while the largest crowd was present in the evening.*[55]

Then, to further enhance the attractiveness of the park, around 1905 the Railway approached the Water Commissioners with a request to use a theatre, which the city had previously built near the pavilion.[56] Cognizant of the ire that the Waterworks Park Theatre had caused within the London community in 1897, this time considerable care was taken to ensure that not only the theatre building, but all of the theatre's performances would be above reproach, the Railway Company in a promotional brochure made the following statement.

> *The theatre is an open-air one, a delightful place to sit a few hours with the trees all about and the sky above. The covered stage backs to the river, and the rest of the theatre is on a hill making a natural incline…This summer a change was made and a repertoire company (as opposed to a vaudeville company) of extraordinary merit was secured and high-class plays have been put on to the entire satisfaction of thousands of citizens who nightly visit the theatre.*[57]

Finally to emphasize the overall attractiveness of this new resort, the Company even added the following words in its brochure: "Considering the immensity, the artificial beauty interspersing the places of rugged grandeur, the ideal picnic facilities, the delightful river overhung with trees, and the purest spring water of earth, Springbank is indeed a 'Park of Parks'." And to complete this picture, in 1914 a full scale amusement park with a Ferris wheel, roller coaster and fun house, opened across the road from the park near the end of the railway system (see the illustration on the opposite page). "Designed along lines of a miniature "Coney Island" the amusement park attracted many of the soldiers who were training in London during the First World War."[58] Given all of these features together with the baseball diamond and the ease of rail transportation, it is not surprising that London's first summer resort in the Waterworks region of Springbank was permanently closed and subsequently replaced by this highly diverse entertainment complex that constituted London's second summer resort elsewhere in the park.



Springbank Amusement Park, circa 1914. Courtesy of the London Room, London Public Library.

Endnotes

[1]*M.L. Simner, "The London Waterworks Controversy: The Great Debate of 1875-1877," The London and Middlesex Historian, vol. 24 (2015), 21-31.*

[2]*London Evening Advertiser, May 27, 1879, 4:4. (Although In several previous publications the Neebing Hotel was referred to as the Northern Hotel, it is unclear if this reference pertained to the hotel's name at one time or instead merely referred to the hotel's location since the hotel was in fact north of the pumphouse.)*

[3]*London Evening Advertiser, May 27, 1879, 4:4.*

[4]*History of the County of Middlesex, Canada, reprint (Belleville, ON: Mika Studio, 1972) 393.*

[5]*K.D. McTaggart, The Victoria Day Disaster (London, ON Kenneth D. McTaggart, 1978) 28.*

[6] *London Evening Advertiser, July 9, 1880, 4:4.*

[7]*London Evening Advertiser, April 18, 1879, 4:4.*

[8]*London Evening Advertiser, May 26, 1879, 4:3.*

[9]*London Evening Advertiser, May 27, 1879, 4:4.*

[10]*London Evening Advertiser, June 30, 1879, 4:1.*

[11]*London Evening Advertiser, May 9, 1879, 4:4.*

[12]*London Evening Advertiser, May 26, 1879, 4:3.*

[13]*London Evening Advertiser, May 27, 1879, 4:4.*

[14]*London Evening Advertiser, May 20, 1879, 4:3.*

[15]*London Evening Advertiser, May 9, 1879, 4:4.*

[16]*London Free Press, May 25, 1880, 4:2.*

[17] *K.D. McTaggart, Victoria Day Disaster, 11-12.*

[18]*London Evening Advertiser, April 4, 1879, 4:4.*

[19]*London Free Press, July 2, 1879, 4:2.*

[20]*Victoria Day Disaster; Dan Brock, "Crew and Passengers on Board the Fatal Trip of the Victoria," MS, May 30, 2015. See also Ken McTaggart, London's Darkest Hours (London, ON; Ken D. McTaggart, 1999), 1-79.*

[21]*London Evening Advertiser, May 16, 1881, 2:4.*

[22]*London Evening Advertiser, May 16, 1881, 2:5.*

[23]*London Evening Advertiser, May 25, 1881, 1:4*

[24]*London Free Press, June 9, 1881, 3:3-4.*

[25]*K.D. McTaggart, Victoria Day Disaster, 93.*

[26]*London Free Press, June 10, 1881, 3:3-4.*

[27]*London Evening Advertiser, July 2, 1881, 2:5.*

[28]*London Evening Advertiser, June 29, 1882, 4:6.*

[29]*London Evening Advertiser, May 25, 1882, 3:3.*

[30]*London Evening Advertiser, May 23, 1883, 4:4.*

[31]*London Evening Advertiser, June 30, 1883, 3:3.*

[32]*London Evening Advertiser, May 20, 1881, 4:1.*

[33]*G.A. Onn, The History of the London Street Railway Company (1873-1951) (1958). Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts, The University of Western Ontario, London, Canada. [57] See also Ken McTaggart and Paul Merrifield, The History of The Pumphouse and Springbank Park (London, ON: Ken D. McTaggart, [2010], 26-27.*

[34]*London Evening Advertiser, May 25, 1888, 1:3.*

[35]*London Free Press, May 23, 1889, 8:4.*

[36]*London Evening Advertiser, May 25, 1892, 8:3.*

[37]*K.D. McTaggart, Victoria Day Disaster, 100.*

[38]*K.D. McTaggart, Victoria Day Disaster, 98.*

[39]*London Free Press, July 2, 1889, 3:3. See also History of the County of Middlesex, 992-993.*

[40]*Proceedings of the London Municipal Council, 1895, 1896.*

[41]*London Free Press, May 26, 1896, 3:4.*

[42]*London Free Press, June 18, 1896, 3:5.*

[43]*The Free Press, June 30, 1896, 5:2.*

[44]*London Free Press, May 20, 1897, 3:6.*

[45]*London Free Press, May 25, 1897, 8:4.*

[46]*London Free Press, May 3, 1897, 3:6.*

[47]*London Free Press, May 5, 1897, 5:5; London Free Press, May 14, 1897, 5:3. For an earlier example of London's Protestant clergymen weighing in on what was immoral vs moral see Frederick H. Armstrong, "Obscenity in Victorian London: The Lotto Davene Poster Trial," Simcoe's Choice: Celebrating London's Bicentennial 1793-1993, Guy St-Denis editor (Toronto & Oxford: Dundurn Press, 1992), 175-192.*

[48]*London Free Press, August 7, 1897, 3:5.*

[49]*London Free Press, December 30, 1897, 8:5. As an interesting aside, this article also contained information on the history of the building that housed the hotel. "The building, which was formerly St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, of this city, was removed from the city by the late Charles Coombs, the owner of the mill site upon which the pumphouse now stands. It was Mr. Coombs intention to use it as a storehouse, but his property shortly afterwards passed into the possession of the city, and the place was converted into a summer hotel and pavilion."*

[50]*Appendix to the Council Proceedings, July 5, 1897, 161. See also Pat Morden, Putting Down Roots: A history of London's Parks and River (St. Catharines, ON: Stonehouse Publications, 1988), 13-1.*

[51]*London Free Press, June 30, 1898, 5:5.*

[52] *Nancy Z. Tausky, Historical Sketches of London: From Site to City (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 1993), 54-55.*

[53]*London Free Press, May 24, 1898, 3:4.*

[54]*London Free Press, May 25, 1898, 8:4.*

[55]*LondonFree Press, July 1, 1898, 3:6.*

[56]*An Agreement between the Water Commissioners and the London Street Railway Company (1906), 833-844.*

[57]*London Street Railway Company Booklet (circa 1905). Box 201A, London Room, London Public Library.*

[58]*Alan Noon, East of Adelaide: Photographs: commercial, industrial and working-class urban Ontario 1905 - 1930 (London, ON: London Regional Art and Historical Museums, 1989), 140.*

Volume 25, 2016

Women Drivers in Pre-World War I London

Dan Brock

The automobile article in the 2014 issue of *The London and Middlesex Historian* mentions Anna Shaw-Wood who was the first woman in the London area, to drive and own an automobile.[1] As noted in "The Pioneer Phase of Automobiles in London and Area," the only surviving daughter of Richard Shaw-Wood of "Woodholme," then in London Township, got to drive his Locomobile steamer, believed to have been purchased in Toronto in 1901. Then, in July 1902, Anna purchased her own automobile, likely as a gift from her doting father, for "over $1,000."[2] Unfortunately, no mention is made of the make of the automobile or whether it was steam, electric or gasoline powered. One suspects, however, that it was an electric vehicle owing to the fact that it did not need to be cranked.

The earliest known photo of a woman in an automobile in the London area is that of Bertha Williams, about 28 years old, in 1905. She, her husband James, and their two children were living in St. Thomas by 1901.[3] In the photograph below, Bertha is seen sitting on the driver's side, somewhere along Hamilton Road, while a tire is being repaired. Blown tires were a common occurrence at the time.

Bertha Williams patiently waits for the tire to be repaired. The rubber permit at the rear of the vehicle is # 2858. Note the windmill tower in the background behind the car. C.W. Ellis Fond, Elgin County Archives.

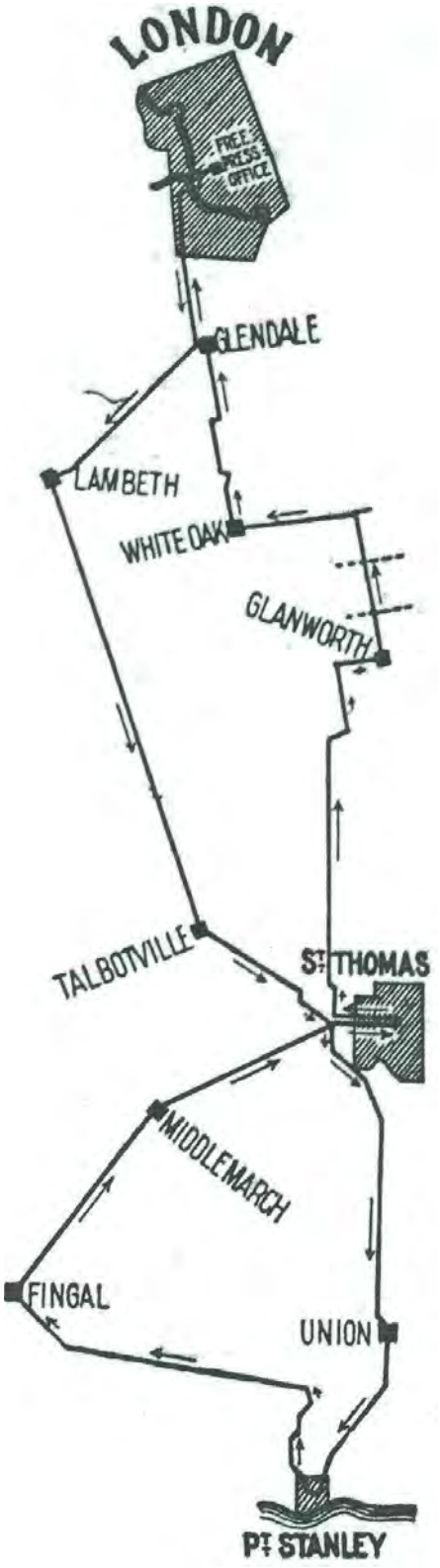
It was events in the United States, such as the "affiliation tour" organized by the Wolverine Automobile Club of Detroit, which led *The London Free Press* to sponsor the Forest City's first "Sociability Run." The London event proved to be "unique in automobile circles in Ontario." As for the "affiliation tour" the non-competitive pleasure trip, in which the drivers would in many cases "be accompanied by their wives and children," was held around Lake Erie, via Toledo, Cleveland, Buffalo, Toronto, Hamilton, London and Port Huron, beginning on June 22, 1911.[4] In this respect it was reminiscent of the June trip by three couples from Cleveland who spent the night of June 24th-25th in London and returned home by way of Sarnia, Detroit and Toledo.[5]

As for London's sociability run, it was to be held on Wednesday, June 7th and was for car owners and dealers in "Western Ontario" over a specific route from London to Port Stanley and back.[6]

Like the tour organized by the Wolverine Automobile Club of Detroit in May, the sociability tour strictly forbade racing.[7]

Each local automobile dealer signed up as many car owners as possible who drove the make of automobile sold by that dealer. The car driven by the dealer who had the "greatest number of cars for which he is representative in the run" was to receive a half page of free advertising in *The* London *Free Press*. As each car had to be driven by its owner the lists the day before and the day after the event provide us with the names of various females who both drove and owned automobiles.[8]

The known names of the women who owned their own automobile and signed up for the run were: Miss Armstrong, Mrs. J.C. Beemer, Mrs. George H. Belton, Mrs. C.E. Bernard, Miss Frances Burgess, Mrs. M.G. Hueston, Mrs. W.E. Robinson and Miss Cecilia McTaggart, all apparently of London.[9]



Route of the Sociability Run, June 7, 1911
London Free Press, 3 June 1911, 14:3-7.

Given that it was a single woman, Isabel C. Armstrong, who wrote an article for the 1914 Christmas issue of *The Echo*, a London weekly, entitled "My Lady of the Car," it is believed that she was most probably the "Miss Armstrong" in question. In 1911 Isabel, age 32, was living at the Y.W.C.A. boarding home on the southeast corner of Wellington Street and Princess Avenue. The home was overseen by the superintendent Margaret Clerihew, widow of George W. Clerihew. Two years earlier, Isabel C. Armstrong was listed in the *London City Directory* as editor of *The Echo*.[10] While she had signed up for the sociabilty run, "Miss Armstrong's" name does not appear on the list of those who made the run. Perhaps she was one of those who chose not to proceed owing to the threatening weather on the afternoon of June 7th or, perhaps Miss Armstrong, decided it would be better if she did not partake in an event sponsored by a rival newspaper.[11]

By 1911, John Charlton Beemer, age 34, sold Chalmers and Maxwell automobiles on the north side of Carling Street, two doors west of Richmond.[12] In 1902 or 1903 he had been James C. Duffield's chauffeur. Previously, Beemer had "worked in the early days of the automobile production era in Detroit and Lansing, Michigan, with R.E. Olds, manufacturer of the Oldsmobile…"[13] Adora, "Mrs. J.C. Beemer," 33 years old at the time of the sociability run, was the daughter of Alex Peter and Sarah Cockburne of Strathroy. Adora and John were married in Strathroy in 1903 and lived on the north side of Princess Avenue, two doors east of Waterloo[14]

John had had the honour of driving the pilot car, "a sturdy little Galt," in the run. Accompanying him were Herman A. Kompass, secretary of the event and advertising manager of *The London Free Press*, and Henry Leddon of the Galt Motor Company.[15]

While Adora did not win the special prize of an automobile bonnet for the "lady driver coming nearest to secret time," her husband, John, driving the pilot car, won first prize for the dealer coming nearest to the secret time, with a time of 3 hours, 52 minutes and 30 seconds.

J.C. Beemer, driver, and H.P. Kompass, secretary of the run, in the front seat, with H. Leddon, of the Galt Motor Company in the rear seat. *London Free Press*, June 8, 1911, 1-4-6.

It was William A. Hall, with a time of only 20 seconds less than the secret time of 4 hours, 2 minutes and 40 second who won first prize and the silver trophy. Hall lived on Lorne Avenue and was a driver for the Dominion Express Co. on Richmond Street.[16]

George Harrison Belton, age 55, was a lumber dealer on the west side Rectory just north of the Grand Trunk Railway (now the CN) tracks. Alice T., "Mrs. George H. Belton," age 43, was the daughter of John and Margaret Ann Croden of London. The Beltons were living on the northeast corner of Central Avenue and Wellington Street. They had married in London in 1893.[17]

Charles Edward Bernard had obtained a one-third share of his first automobile with Fred Darch and Clarence Reid in the summer of 1903. By 1911 he was selling Fords, Hudsons and Reos at his garage on the west side of Wellington Street, two doors south of Dundas. Nancy, "Mrs. C.E. Bernard," age 31, and "Eddie," age 35, lived in the West Court Alexandra Apartments on the southeast corner of Queen's Avenue. and Wellington Street.[18]

On the day of the run, Nancy Bernard chose to ride with her husband and another couple. Whether she took a turn behind the wheel is not known. Eddie, with 16 Ford cars in the run, won the special prize "for dealer with the greatest number of cars of the make he represents."[19]

"Miss Frances Burgess" appears to be the daughter of H. Frank and Margaret Burgess who lived on the north side of Dundas Street, between English and Ontario as on the day of the run she was accompanied by "H.F. Burgess, Max McEvoy, [and] Ralph O'Neil." While the Burgess family is not to be found on the 1911 Canada census for the entire province of Ontario, it is on the 1901 Canada census for London. Frances would have been 18 years old at the time of the run.[20]

Edith, "Mrs. M.G. Hueston," age 30 at the time of the sociability run, was the former Edith Jane Knapton of Detroit, daughter of Charles and Amelia Ann (McArthur) Knapton. In 1902, in Windsor, Ontario she married Melville Gordon Hueston, then a dentist in Detroit. By 1911, the Huestons had moved to London and "Mel," age 31, was in partnership with his father Robert and brother William R. in R. Hueston & Sons which operated liveries and a garage. R. Hueston & Sons were the London agents for the E.M.F. and Flanders cars. The Hueston garage was on the west side of Richmond Street, between Fullarton and Maple (now Dufferin Avenue). Mel and Edith lived on the south side of King Street, between Wellington and Waterloo.[21]

Mel played a leading role in both the affiliation tour and the sociability run. The Wolverine Automobile Club, of Detroit had contacted him to invite "car owners of London to participate in the affiliation tour of the club" scheduled to "leave Detroit June 22 for a circular trip around Lake Erie."[22] On Monday, May 29th he "piloted" the "Pathfinding Car of the London Free Press Sociability Run" over the route from London to Port Stanley and return. With him "was the committee appointed to choose the route and set the secret time."[23] It was reported that Hueston stated "that the roads are in splendid condition, and that everything would indicate that no better route for a run of 50 miles or so could have been chosen."[24]

Twenty-nine-year-old Hectorene, "Mrs. W.E. Robinson," was the "lady driver" with the time closest to the secret time. She drove the route in 3 hours, 52 minutes and 30 seconds and was awarded an automobile bonnet. Hectorene and her husband, William E., lived on the north side of St. James Street, between Alma and Wellington.[25]

The seventh and last of the known women drivers and car owners who entered the sociability run was Cecilia McTaggart, age 22. She lived with her mother, Josephine McTaggart and maternal grandmother, Jane Spencer, on the northwest corner of Queen's Avenue and William Street, immediately east of James C. Duffield and in one of the most fashionable residential parts of London. Jane was the widow of William Spencer, one of 16 oil refiners, mainly from London, who in 1880 founded the Imperial Oil Company.[26]

In addition to these seven women we also know that Caroline Hunt and her sister-in-law, May Hunt owned their own automobiles, probably before the end of 1912. Caroline's husband was John L.A. Hunt and May's was his brother Charles B. Hunt, sons of the late Charles Hunt. The electric automobiles in question were manufactured by the Tate Electric Ltd. of Walkerville, Ontario, and were likely purchased between 1912 and early 1915 when the company was in existence.[27]

It was in February 1912 that London's first annual automobile show was held. A pitch was made to women by the mention of "electric broughams" on display "for the ladies" and the following sketch.[28]

It would appear that, in the late spring or early summer of 1914 the photographer, Edgar J. Sanders, whose studio was on the west side of Richmond Street, south of Dundas, took a number of posed photographs at Victoria Park of women with their automobiles. Many of these women and their cars were depicted in the two-page article, "My Lady of the Car," written by the aforesaid Isabel C. Armstrong.[29]

The first photo in the article was that of Beatrice Brown, age 27, daughter of Arthur and Anna Belle (Walker) King of Stratford. Her husband, W. Randle Brown, was the owner of The Brown Optical Co., on the south side of Dundas Street between Clarence and Wellington.[30] Many London history enthusiasts are familiar with the advertisement for the Brown Optical Co. on the spine of *London City Directories* of the 1930s and '40s. Randle was one of 12 passengers in **one** of the vehicles in the sociability run of the previous year.[31] Beatrice and Randle were married in Stratford in 1909. She was described as "London's first girl to take up motoring." If so, Beatrice must have had some 10 years experience behind the wheel.[32]

Mrs. W. Randle Brown in her 1914 Franklin, possibly a Model M-Series 5 Touring.

The second photo in the article is that of 33-year-old Maud, "Mrs. Jack Smallman," in her new, tawny-coloured Chalmers Roadster and wearing her leopard motor coat. She had purchased her first automobile some three years earlier.

Maud Hamilton Smallman, formerly of Hamilton, was the daughter of Robert and Selina Fraser (Hamilton) Prince and maternal granddaughter of the late James Hamilton, the former cashier (manager) of the Bank of Upper Canada branch in London and well-known "Sunday painter."[33] Maud had married John Elton Smallman in Niagara Falls, Ontario in 1900.

John E. "Jack" Smallman was the only son of Thomas H. Smallman, one of London's wealthy industrialists. By 1914, Jack was a director of Smallman & Ingram, the large department store on the southwest corner of Dundas and Richmond streets. The president of the store was his life-long bachelor uncle John B. Smallman.[34]

Five years earlier, in 1909, Jack and Maude were on board the *HMS Republic*, which steamed out of New York Harbor, for a scheduled Mediterranean cruise and to visit Jack's sister in Cairo, Egypt. In the early morning hours of January 23rd, however, this palatial and "unsinkable" White Star Liner passenger ship collided with the in-bound immigrant ship *SS Florida* in a dense fog off the New England coast. Three lives were lost from each vessel as a result of the collision but all the rest of those on board the *Republic,* including the Smallmans, were saved. The *Republic* sank while in tow the next day.[35]

"Unsinkable" Maude, "Mrs. Jack Smallman" was one of three passengers in the automobile driven by James Kerrigan in the Sociability Run of June 1911.[36]

Mrs. Jack Smallman in her tawny-coloured Chalmers Roadster.

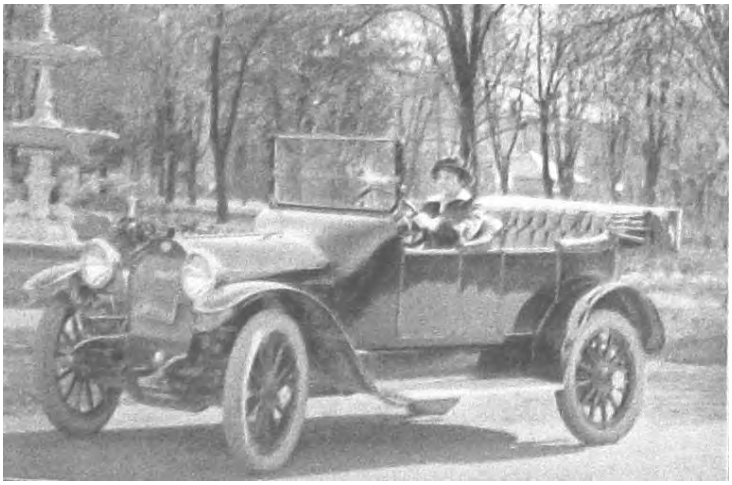
Seated in her navy blue McLaughlin-Buick, in front of the Boer War Memorial is 38-year-old Eva McKillop. Her husband, James Black McKillop, of the legal firm of McKillop Murphy & Gunn, was the county crown attorney.[37] Eva Nancy Roblin, daughter of Roderick S. and Phoebe Jane "Jennie" (Allison) Robin married James McKillop in 1903.[38]

Mrs. James B. McKillop in her McLaughlin-Buick.

The fourth photo in the December 1914 article is that of Shirley L. Thompson, age 37. Her husband was the eye, ear, nose and throat specialist, Dr. Septimus Thompson. His office was on the west side of Park Avenue (Clarence Street), two doors north of Dundas, while the family residence was on the east side of Park, immediately north of Hyman Hall on the northeast corner of Park and Queen's avenues. Shirley Louise Grist, daughter of Charles and Fanny B. (Kittridge) Grist of Strathroy, had married Septimus in 1907.[39] While the make of her car was not mentioned, we do know that she was known to take "long trips into the country with it."

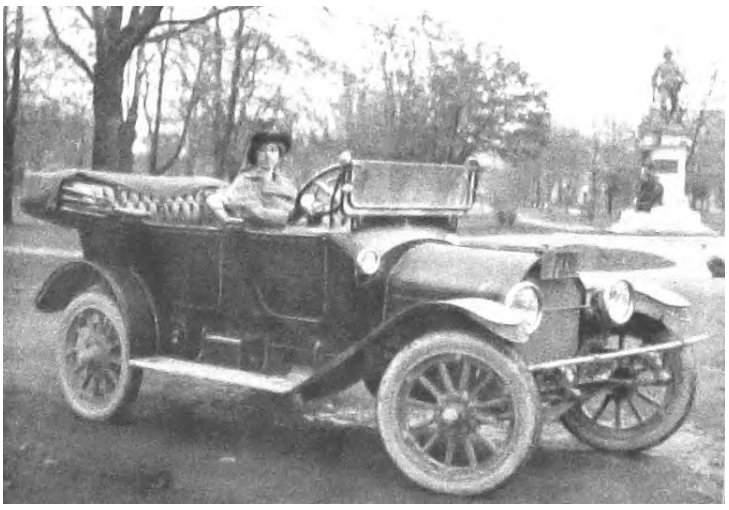
Mrs. Septimus Thompson and her automobile.

In the next photo Barbara Brown sits at the wheel of her Page, Detroit. She is posed in front of the three-tiered fountain executed by John R. Peel, father of the artist Paul Peel. To date, nothing further is known of her.



Miss Barbara Brown in her Page, Detroit.

Twenty-year-old Jean Waugh is seen below in her father's five-passenger Oakland. Her parents were Dr. William E. and Marion Waugh. Jean chauffeured her dad on his rounds to make house calls to patients. The Waughs lived at the southwest corner of Talbot and Kent streets.[40]



Miss Jean Waugh in her father's five-passenger Oakland.

The seventh photograph in the Christmas issue of the *Echo* is that of Ada Drake, age 32, in an Overland coupe, positioned in front of the three guns which saw battle during the Crimean War. Ada and her husband, Dr. Frederick P. Drake, lived on the northwest corner of Wellington and King streets.[41] Ada was the daughter of Theodore and Ada (Kibbee) Wright of Port Huron, Michigan. She and the widower, Dr. Frederick Phineas Drake, were married there in 1902.[42]

Mrs. F.P. Drake in her Overland coupe.

Twenty-four year old Dorothy Reid is believed to be behind the wheel in the photo below. If so, the passenger may have been her mother, Mary E. Reid, whose husband was George M. Reid. George was the head of Reid Bros. & Co., manufacturers of stationary, on the west side of Clarence Street, between King and Dundas. The Reids lived on the north side of Central Avenue, two doors west of Wellington.[43] Dorothy was a common sight behind the wheel on London's streets and, in 1914, joined other members of the "summer colony" in Port Stanley.[44] It is believed that her Packard was a 1913 touring model.

Miss Dorothy Reid in her Packard.

The ninth photograph in Isabel Armstrong's article shows Meta Macbeth, age 34. She is described as the "first girl in London to take out a license to drive a car." Meta is also the first woman in this article whose name appears in the *City of London Directory for 1915*. Her parents were George M. and Emma Macbeth. George was a younger brother of Judge T. Talbot Macbeth. As for Meta, she was living with her uncle and aunt, Dr. James S. and Mary G. Niven. Dr. Niven's office and residence was at the northwest corner of Colborne and Dundas streets.[45]

Miss Meta Macbeth.

The last photo in Armstrong's article is that of 29-year-old Floy Lawson behind the wheel of her Oakland.

Like Meta Macbeth, Floy's name also appears in the 1915 directory. She was living with her widowed mother, Lorena (Hodgins) Lawson on the south side of Cheapside Street, two doors east of St. George. With them lived Floy's brother, F. Ray Lawson, his wife, the former Helen Newton whom he had married in 1909, and their three children. (They were to have two more.) Ray Lawson was manager of Lawson and Jones, printers, at the time and later would become lieutenant-governor of Ontario.

It is believed that the nephew, less than two years of age in the summer of 1914, standing beside his aunt Floy in the car is Frank C. Lawson and that the woman seated in the rear of the automobile is his mother Helen Lawson. Thomas F.G. "Tom" Lawson of "Woodholm," the youngest of the Lawson boys, would be born in 1915.[46]

Armstrong notes that Floy had "covered many miles in the last few years" in her Oakland and that "her car has been dubbed the 'North End Bus,' owing to her habit of picking up the kiddies of her immediate neighborhood and taking them to kindergarten and home again." One could almost be certain that among these kindergarten pupils was Helen, eldest child of her brother, Ray.

Miss Floy Lawson with her nephew beside her.

Fun fact!

On the north side of Cheapside Street, at the northeast corner of Cheapside and St. George lived the Lawson's neighbor M. Marie Warman, the widow of Cy Warman. Marie was the inspiration for the popular 1890s song, "Sweet Marie."[a]

London Public Library

In 1931 the Willard Chocolate Factory, Toronto, launched its signature chocolate bar, Sweet Marie (now made by Cadbury /Neilson's) which was inspired by the song.

Early Sweet Marie packaging, ebay.

The eleventh and last woman driver noted by Armstrong was Eula White in her Chalmers. At 20 years of age, she was the second youngest of the women mentioned and had just "joined the ranks of the motoring girls" in 1914. Unfortunately no accompanying photograph of her and her automobile had been provided. Eula was the daughter of Arthur W. and Carrie M. White. Arthur was vice-president and manager of Geo White & Sons Co. Ltd., manufacturers of engines, boilers and threshing machines. The White family lived in "Wortley Cottage" on the northwest corner of Wortley Road and Byron Avenue.[47] Eula, may have been the "Miss White" in the car driven by her uncle Frank White in the aforementioned Sociability Run.[48]

While there were undoubtedly other women in London who owned or at least drove cars prior to the outbreak of World War I these are not yet known. One remaining woman may join the ranks of these early women drivers. The photograph below, dated 1914, was also taken in front of the Boer War Monument in Victoria Park, but obviously in the winter. It shows the unnamed wife of a banker.

This then concludes, to date, the identification of women drivers and their automobiles in London prior to the outbreak of the First World War.

In her article, Isabel C. Armstrong had sought to demonstrate that a woman driver would not endanger her matrimonial chances and that she had the "quality of nerves" to handle "a great, big, clumsy automobile" and not "lose her head at the critical moment."

In this article I have not only attempted to document all women known to own and drive an automobile in London up to and including the summer of 1914 but also to give them some identity, where possible, beyond the conventional "Miss Jane Smith" or "Mrs. John Brown."

A debt of gratitude is owed to Cindy Hartman for drawing my attention to the photograph of the banker's wife, to Catherine McEwen for her insights into the Smallman family and to the staff of the London Room at the Central Library.

Banker's wife. Public Library and Archives, Ottawa.

End Notes

[1] Dan Brock, "The Pioneer Phase of Automobiles in London and Area," *The London and Middlesex Historian*, 23 (Autumn 2014), 13

[2] "Pioneer Phase of Automobiles," 13

[3] 1901 Census of Canada, Ontario, Elgin East, St. Thomas, sub dist. 8, p. 2

[4] "Invite Londoners to Join in Tour," *The London Free Press (LFP)*, 22 May 1911, 2:2; "Banner-Bedecked Pathfinding Car Goes Over Sociability Run Route," *LFP*, 29 May 1911, 1:4-6

[5] "Pioneer Phase of Automobiles," 7

[6] "Autoists Interested in Sociability Run," 1:4-6

[7] "Invite Londoners to Join in Tour"; "Autoists Interested in Sociability Run," 1:6

[8] "Autoists Interested in Sociability Run"; "Countryside Thronged as Long Parade of Cars Pass in First Sociability Run," *LFP*, 8 June 1911, 1:4-6

[9] "More than Eighty Cars Will Participate in the Sociability Tour of the Free Press," *LFP*, 6 June 19111, 1:4-6; "Countryside Thronged as Long Parade of Cars Pass," 10:5-6

[10] *Vernon's City of London Directory for the Years1909-1910* (Hamilton & London, Henry Vernon, [1909]), 120, 145, 201, 551; 1911 Census, London, dist. 34, p. 11

[11] "Seventy Well-Filled Cars Start in Sociability Run," LFP, 7 June 1911, 1:1. For example, *The London Advertiser* did not cover the run.

[12] 1911 Census of Canada, Ontario, London, dist 43, p. 9; *City of London Directory for the Year 1912*, 102; 28,169. See Maxwell and Chalmers advertisements, *LFP*, 3 Feb. 1912, 22

[13] "Pioneer Phase of Automobiles," 11-12, 20, n.19

[14]1911 Census of Canada, Ontario, London, dist 43, p. 9; Ontario Marriage Register (OMR), Beemer & Cockburne, # 012991; *City of London Directory for the Year 1912* (Hamilton & London, Henry Vernon & Son, [1912], 98, 169

[15] "Countryside Thronged as Long Parade of Cars Pass," 1-4-6; 10:5; *City of London Directory for the Year 1912*, 370; 1911 Census of Canada, Ontario, Galt, sub dist. 14, p. 1

[16] "Countryside Thronged as Long Parade of Cars Pass," 1:4-5; *City of London Directory for the Year 1912*, 249, 310

[17] 1911 Census of Canada, Ontario, London, dist 22, p. 2; *City of London Directory for the Year 1912*, 30, 105, 170; OMR, Belton & Croden, # 007802

[18] "Pioneer Phase of Automobiles," 16-17; 1911 Census of Canada, Ontario, London, dist 2, p. 5; *City of London Directory for the Year 1912*, 112, 131, 172. See Reo, Ford and Hudson advertisements, *LFP*, 3 Feb. 1912, 24, 25

[19] "Countryside Thronged as Long Parade of Cars Pass," 1:5, 10:5

[20] "Countryside Thronged as Long Parade of Cars Pass," 10:5; *City of London Directory for the Year 1912*, 46, 195; 1911 Census of Canada, Ontario, London, dist 13, p. 8

[21] 1911 Census of Canada, Ontario, London, dist 18, p. 312; Ontario Birth Register, Edith Jane Knapton, # 018580; OMR, Hueston & Knapton, # 006559; *City of London Directory for the Year 1912*, 75, 110, 340-41; "Banner-Bedecked Pathfinding Car," 1:4

[22] "Invite Londoners to Join in Tour"

[23] "Banner-Bedecked Pathfinding Car," 1:4; "Roads Fine for Auto Outing," *LFP*, 31 May 1911, 12:4

[24] "Roads Fine"

[25] 1911 Census of Canada, Ontario, London, dist 15, p. 2; *City of London Directory for the Year 1912*, 115, 508; "First Annual Automobile Show," *LFP*, 3 Feb. 1912, 21:3-4

[26] 1911 Census, London, dist 94, p.6; *City of London Directory for the Year 1912*, 100, 547; 1881 Census of Canada, 1881, Ontario, London, sub dist. 4, p. 47

[27] "Pioneer Phase of Automobiles," 19

[28] "First Annual Automobile Show," 21, 1-3. As a car body style the brougham originally had an outside seat in front for the chauffeur and an enclosed cabin behind for the passengers. In strict use of the term the rear end of the roof was sharply squared and the body line at the base of the front of the passenger enclosure was forward-curving as was characteristic of the nineteenth-century brougham carriage on which the car was based. By this time, 1912, the front of the body and the chauffeur were often deleted from the design, with controls placed inside for the owner to operate the vehicle.

[29] Isabel C. Armstrong, "My Lady of the Car," *The Christmas Echo* (December 1914), 4-5.

[30] OMR, Brown & King, # 016900; 1911 Census, London, dist. 15, p. 18; *Vernon's City of London Directory for the Year 1915* (Hamilton & London, Henry Vernon & Son, [1915]), 217

[31] "Countryside Thronged as Long Parade of Cars Pass," 10:6

[32] As noted earlier, Anna Shaw-Wood, who then lived a few miles north of London, was driving her father's Locomobile by 1901. By 1902, a few automobiles were owned by Londoners. "Pioneer Phase of Automobiles," 11-13

[33] 1901Census, London South, polling sub-division 9, p. 19; OMR, Smallman & Prince, # 016607. Catherine B. McEwen, *No Smiling Path* ([London, C.B. McEwen, 2004]), 57-61. The building which housed the Bank of Upper Canada and was the Hamilton residence still stands on the northwest corner of Ridout St. and Queens Ave.

[34] *City of London Directory* for 1915, 613; Michael Baker and Hilary Bates Neary, eds. *100 Fascinating Londoners* (Toronto, James Lorimer & Company Ltd., 2005), 39-40. A third John Smallman was connected also with Smallman & Ingram. John James Smallman, an assumed first cousin of Jack Smallman, was the son of Christopher Switzer Smallman and his wife Jessie. John J. was treasurer of business by 1914 and was married to Laura Beatrice, daughter of Arscott and Elizabeth Isaac of London. OMR, Smallman & Isaac, # 07990

[35] L.N. Bronson, "Deepsea hunts for treasure stir thoughts of ship's sinking," in "Looking Over Western Ontario," *LFP*, 2 Sept. 1987, A13:1-3; see http:/www.rms-republic.com/index1.html/ (accessed 4 Sept. 2016). It was to be three years later that another "palatial and 'unsinkable' White Star Liner passenger ship" sank with far great disastrous consequences.

[36] "Countryside Thronged as Long Parade of Cars Pass," 10:6

[37] 1911 Census, London, dist. 42, p. 3; *City of London Directory for 1915*, 472

[38] OMR Brown & Roblin, # 016900

[39] 1911 Census, London, dist. 12, p. 5; *City of London Directory for 1915*, 106, 651; OMR, Thompson & Grist, # 018990

[40] 1911 Census, London, dist. 11, p. 16; *City of London Directory for 1915*, 138, 678

[41] 1911 Census, London, dist. 1, p. 101; *City of London Directory for 1915*, 148, 289

[42] Return of Marriages in the County of St. Clair, Michigan, Drake & Wright, p. 251, # 6988

[43] 1911 Census, London, dist. 11, p. 201; *City of London Directory for 1915*, 33, 39, 570, 571

[44] Like today, many non-residents had cottages or summer homes in Port Stanley where they spent several days or weeks during the summer months.

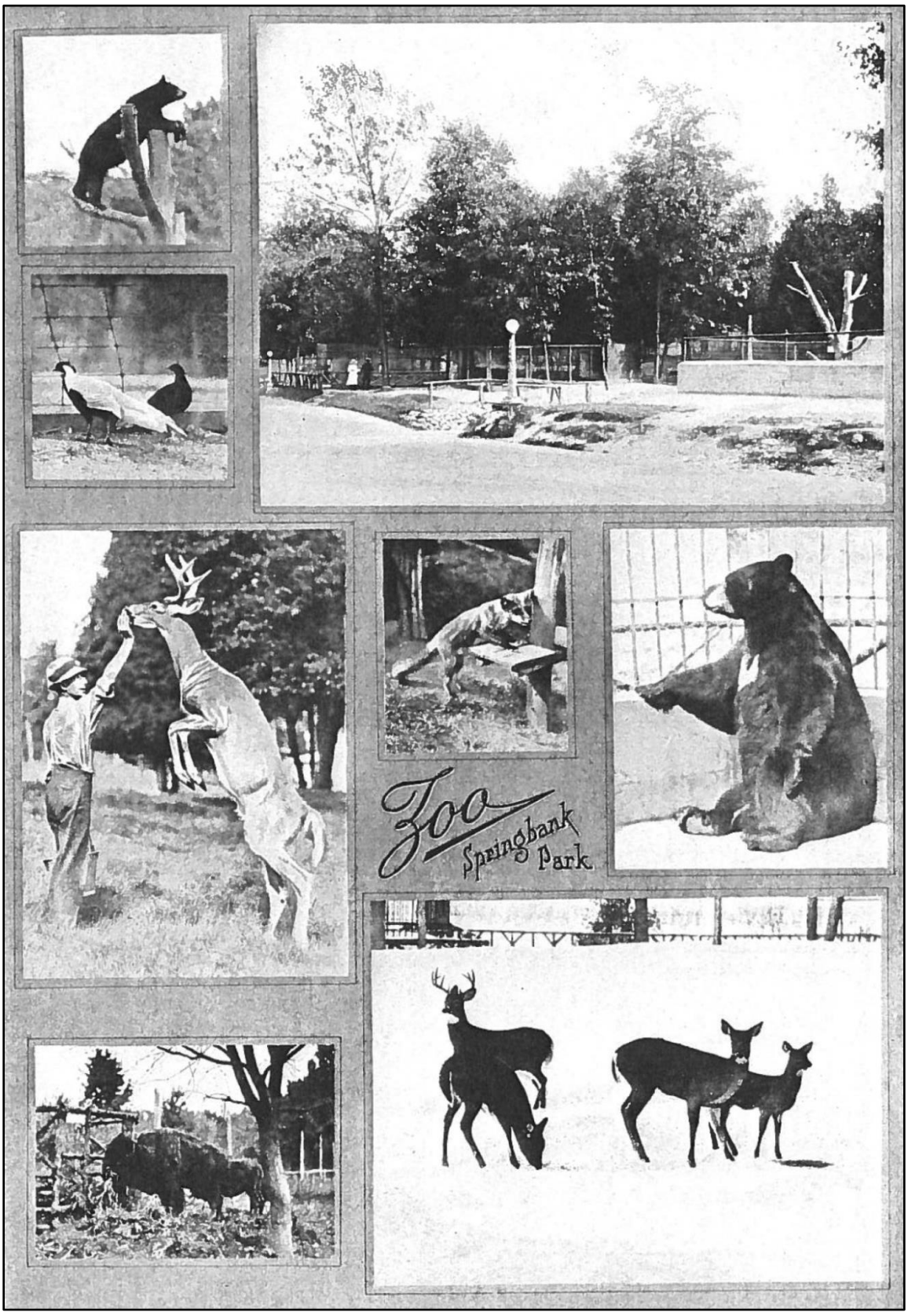
[45] 1871 Census of Canada, Ontario, London, dist. 10, sub dist. F, ward 6, p. 63; 1911 Census, London, dist. 30, p. 8; *City of London Directory for 1915*, 40, 454, 526

[46] 1911 Census, London, dist. 21, p. 11; *City of London Directory for 1915*, 36, 432. 1921 Census of Canada, Ontario, London, dist 101, sub dist. 23, p. 2; Frank Chester Lawson, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs BIRLS Death File, 1850-2010; Frank Lawson, U.S., Social Security Applications and Claims Index, 1936-2007, SSN 386094912. See also Bill Corfield, *The Lawsons of London* (Surrey, BC, Timberholme Books Ltd, 2001)

[47] 1911 Census, London, dist. 9, p. 17; *City of London Directory for 1915*, 157, 686, 687

[48] "Countryside Thronged as Long Parade of Cars Pass," 10:5

With the exception of photos marked, photos in this article are credited to Isabel C. Armstrong, "My Lady of the Car," *The Christmas Echo* (December 1914), photographer Edgar J. Sanders.



PUC annual report, 1923, page 65.

Volume 25, 2016

When Springbank Park Had a Zoo

Catherine B. McEwen

All traces of a zoo in London's Springbank Park have vanished now, but one existed there for over forty years in the twentieth century. Strangely enough, it all started by accident when Lieut. Col. Francis B. Leys' herd of deer escaped from their enclosure at his home in South London in 1902 - and thereby hangs a tale.

Col. Leys had a life-long love of animals, having been born on a farm in Pickering Township in 1839. He moved to London around 1868 as captain and paymaster of No. 1 Military District, rising in rank over the years. While maintaining his ties with the militia, he became the first manager of the Dominion Savings and Investment Society in 1875. Three years later, he moved his family to a growing suburban area just south of the Thames River in Westminster Township. This property afforded him enough room for a large house, landscaped gardens, an orchard, a park, outbuildings and stables. Although he owned race horses that were good enough to be entered in the Queen's Plate, his greatest pride was his favourite driving horse which he trained to return home from his office in downtown London - by itself - when it was not needed.

The civic-minded Colonel served on such boards as the Grand Opera House Company, the Horticultural Society, and the Dorchester Fishing Club. In addition, he was one of the first directors of the Northern Life Assurance Company, as well as the president of the Western Fair and the Masonic Temple Company. He was a major supporter for the building of Askin Street Presbyterian Church and was a South London Public School trustee for 12 years. On December 27, 1882, the *London Advertiser* reported on the school's annual entertainment and awards night which had taken place the previous evening. Since Col. Leys had been occupied with handing out prizes to the students, he was genuinely surprised when the chairman called him forward, lauded him for his many contributions to the school, then presented him with a prize of his own in the form of a mysterious package. On opening it in full view of the audience, the well-known animal lover discovered a small kitten, much to the amusement and delight of all, including Col. Leys.

Education remained of prime importance to the Colonel for he actively supported the building of Victoria School. When he was elected Liberal M.P.P. for London in 1898, a new provincial Normal School was under consideration but its location had yet to be decided. Col. Leys proved to be a major force in turning the tide in London's favour. After the city was awarded the facility, few people were surprised when it was built in the Colonel's neighbourhood of South London.

"Woodlawn", his home at 111 Elmwood Avenue, had a fenced deer park at the front of the extensive property. In the summer of 1902, all six of his deer escaped from their enclosure. Being relatively tame, five of them were rounded up and returned to their pen, but the sixth bolted. Being separated from the others, it panicked and ran westerly through McArthur's farm and the Cove flats to the Pipe Line Road (Springbank Drive), then raced toward the Woodbine Hotel before turning down the side road (Wonderland Road South), where it was eventually captured. The exhausted animal was carted home but died soon afterward.[1]

On July 21st, the day after the great deer escape, London's Board of Water Commissioners held its regular meeting. One of the items on the agenda was an offer by Col. Leys to turn his five remaining deer over to the board, if the commissioners would agree to take care of them at Springbank Park. Prior to the formation of the Public Utilities Commission (PUC), the Water Commission was responsible for some land containing excellent springs on the south side of the Thames River west of London. After the City had bought that initial piece of property in 1878, a pumphouse was constructed beside the river and the water from the springs was pumped to a reservoir on top of the high hill immediately to the south, then a pipeline was built from the reservoir along a road allowance back into London. As more land was acquired along the river, the City began developing it and Springbank Park evolved. Col. Leys' proposal to move his deer there would have been an added feature for the public's enjoyment.

With regards to his proposal, *The London Advertiser* reported on July 22nd that: "*The commissioners will decline the offer with thanks.*" The newspaper promptly polled a number of people about starting a zoo and discovered a great deal of enthusiasm for the idea. Acting Mayor Winnett said he was: "… *very much in favor of securing the deer*", and Alderman McMechan stated: "*I think the water commissioners made a mistake when they declined Col. Leys' offer.*" An unidentified citizen praised London's riverside park saying: "… *unless one has seen the parks in other cities where they have a zoo, it is impossible to realize what a fine place we have at Springbank.*"[2] In spite of the positive feelings, nothing further developed over the next decade. Meanwhile, Col. Leys died at Woodlawn on September 11, 1905. Eventually, a Parks Department was formed in 1912 and the Board of Water Commissioners was replaced by the Public Utilities Commission in 1914.

In August of 1915, over a decade after Col. Leys had made his proposal, the Parks Department finally accepted its first gift of animals. Edmund Weld, clerk of the crown, donated three raccoons to start a zoo at Springbank.[3] The animals liked their new living quarters so well that they holed up in the wooden structure by late September, out of sight of the public. When the zookeeper tried to force them out into the fenced enclosure by boarding up the doors, they promptly burrowed back under the walls and settled down inside to hibernate – this time undisturbed. Deer would never have done that!

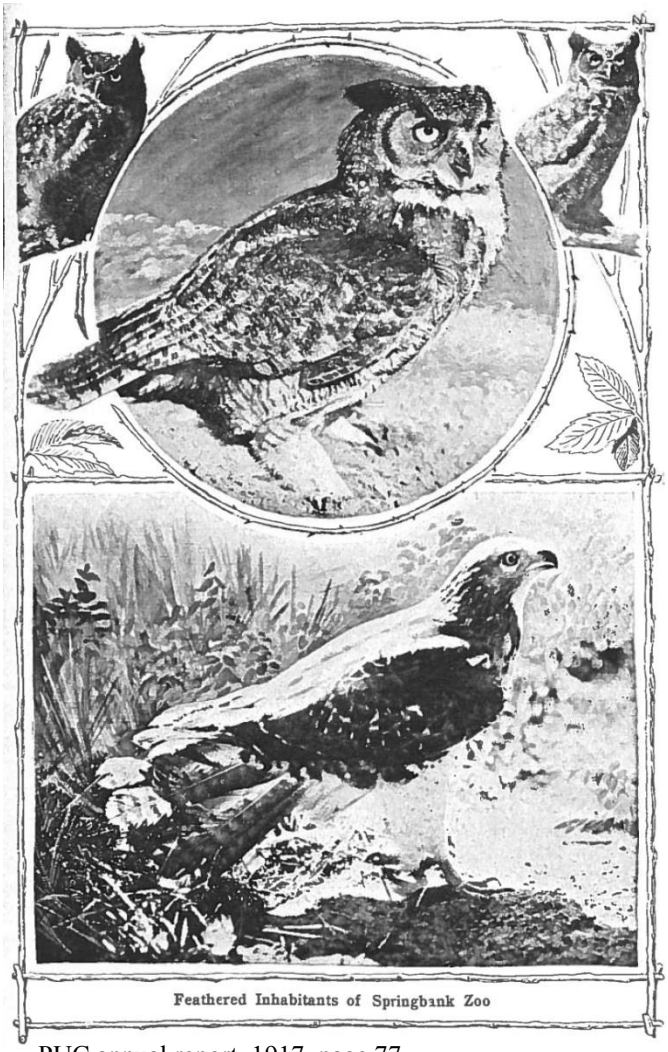
In October, *The London Free Press* donated two owls named "Zimmie" and "Lizzie", promoting the feathered cartoon characters in its front page weather column.

London Free Press, Oct. 2, 1915.

At the same time, Private A. Peckham, of 524 York Street, offered his pet owl and PUC General Manager Edward V. Buchanan accepted it as well. World War I was raging and the soldier wanted to find a home for his bird before he went overseas. The PUC's annual report for 1915 listed the payment of $1.50 to Charles W. Heaman for beef for feeding the owls. It was a modest but positive beginning for the zoo. While these gifts were gratefully received, the Parks Department belatedly decided to look into the acquisition of some deer. Since there was a surplus at Rondeau Provincial Park, Sir Adam Beck, London's M.P.P., was asked for help.

1916 got off to an inauspicious start. The PUC offered a reward of $10 for the arrest and conviction of the person who broke into the coonhouse and stole two of its raccoons – with no results. However, preparations were under way by March for a four-acre deer enclosure midway between the pumphouse and the park's dance pavilion to the south. Unfortunately, the deer from Rondeau Park didn't arrive in a timely fashion, so when J.M. Young of Sarnia offered his red deer, London's PUC gladly accepted the gift and employees trucked him to Springbank on August 4th.[4] But eager Civic Holiday crowds were disappointed when the shy buck stayed hidden in his shelter most of the day. At the same time, the zoo's first alligator went missing, but fortunately for all involved, it was recaptured in the river on August 10th.

The zoo was soon to have some new additions as word began to spread about the growing menagerie. James Carter, Governor of the Middlesex County Jail, bought a "genuine Arizona turkey buzzard" from young Wesley Dickson of McGillivray Township later that August. Dickson had shot the bird but the wounded scavenger had been recovering at the family farm where Carter bought it for $1. He tethered his new "jail bird" in the jail yard for a short time before turning it over to the zoo's burgeoning aviary.[5] It had a limited debut, however, as it only survived until December when a newly-arrived Great Horned Owl did it in.


Feathered Inhabitants of Springbank Zoo

PUC annual report, 1917, page 77.

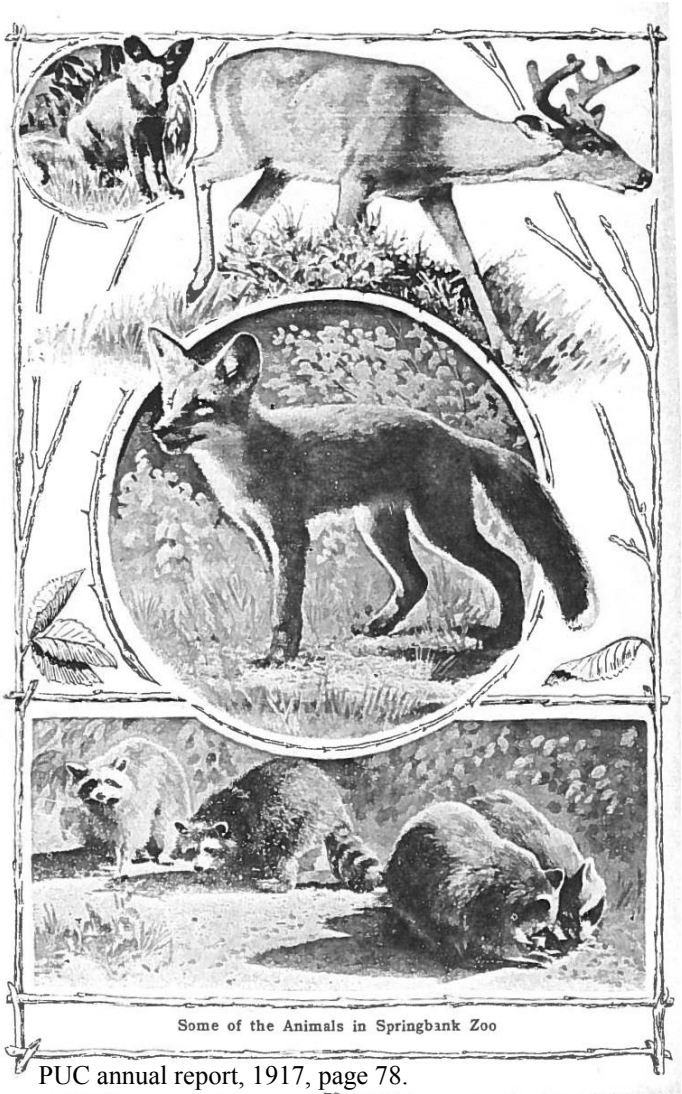
The deer herd grew to four by October. The first buck, known as "Jack", was joined by a younger one named "Bud". After two does finally arrived from Rondeau, officials considered the herd to be complete. Dogs got into their enclosure that fall but did minimal damage. During a second dog attack in March of 1917, Bud became entangled in the wire fence and broke his leg. Veterinarian Dr. William J. Wilson decided it was best to put him out of his misery. Jack, on the other hand,

escaped by jumping over the lofty fence, then swam across the river and made his way to safety in Redmond's swamp where he was discovered several days later. This spot was also known as the Byron Bog and eventually, the Sifton Botanical Bog, near Oxford Street West.[6] After this episode, the keepers realized that the spaces between the strands of fencing were too wide, so wire netting was added and the dog problem was solved.

There was more excitement to come in the deer park. In June, Jack proved once again that he was a real "jumping jack" when he was startled by a streetcar-load of children from St. George's Public School. At that time, the city's electric rail line ended its westerly route in Springbank Park with a loop near the south side of the animal enclosures. Upon arrival, the exuberant children let out a mighty shout which prompted Jack to leave in a hurry. He launched himself in a perfect arc over the fence and headed for parts unknown. He was recovered the next morning while grazing peacefully with the cattle and sheep on Col. Robert McEwen's farm, several kilometers southwest of Byron.

The zoo continued to grow with the donation of a pair of raccoons by Roy Blinn of Brick Street. This restored the raccoon population to its original number of three. In a rare fit of spending, the PUC paid John Rogers of Wingham $8 for a pair of red foxes and $2 for a hawk brought in by Alexander Fuller.

Before any more animals were received at Springbank, General Manager E.V. Buchanan decided to do some much-needed research. He visited Detroit's zoo in the summer of 1917 to see how its bear cages were constructed since a secure facility was an important consideration before London's first bruin arrived in late October. It was donated by Arthur H.B. Keene, of Keene Bros., home furnishers, who obtained a year-old brown bear from Algonquin Park through friends in the north.


Some of the Animals in Springbank Zoo

PUC annual report, 1917, page 78.

On November 19, 1917, *The London Free Press* reported:

> … *General Manager E.V. Buchanan,… and his staff of keepers, are unused to the care of bears. The little brown fellow they have … gave every evidence of severe pains in his "tummy", causing partial paralysis yesterday, and were at a loss for a remedy. Mr. Buchanan sought to get in touch with the keeper of the bears at Dundurn Park, Hamilton, but was unsuccessful. However, some farmers who happened along by the park yesterday diagnosed the bear's*

> *symptoms as those evidenced by young pigs after a spell of too much eating and recommended castor oil. Accordingly a big dose was mixed up and administered. Mr. Buchanan and his staff are now hoping for the best.*

One week later, the same newspaper reported that the critically sick bear had been removed from his cage and was lying, partially paralyzed, in a work building. The veterinarian held out little hope for his recovery, and indeed, he died three days later.

This incident did not diminish the donor's enthusiasm, for Arthur Keene vowed to get a number of replacements as soon as hibernation was over in the spring. Not only that, his brother and business partner, Oliver G. Keene, gave a pair of beavers before the end of the year. In the spring of 1918, Arthur Keene was true to his word when he obtained two black bears from northern Ontario in May. Then, PUC Commissioner Thomas W. McFarland presented the zoo with a pair of hen hawks, and two golden pheasants were also added. Four foxes had an enclosure near one occupied by two coyotes, but the male bear was mistreating his mate so a separation was being contemplated. The zoo grew larger still in June when it saw some of its first births and received new donations. Arthur H. Brener, a local tobacconist, gave two alligators early in the month, while "Cleo" the fawn was born on June 8th amidst an explosion of 187 white rabbits that were inhabiting the deer enclosure.[7] By mid-July, electrician Hiram S. Albertson had presented a porcupine to the zoo.

Next came an opportunity for a larger and more visible attraction. Robert Miller of St. Thomas had bought four bison or buffalo in the northeastern United States but was willing to sell them to London's PUC. After negotiations over the price and the number of animals were unsuccessful in February of 1919, Arthur Keene came to the rescue once again by purchasing the buffalo before they were sent to an abattoir. A deal was reached for three of them to be delivered to the park at a price of $375, while Mr. Keene took the fourth animal to his farm near London. After the buffalo were delivered to Springbank in a box car hauled over the street railway line, apprehensive officials let the animals emerge from the car at their own leisure into their new run adjacent to the deer enclosure. While the exodus went smoothly, officials soon realized that sturdier fencing would be necessary to preserve the safety of the public from these large, unpredictable animals.[8]

In addition to the buffalo, the zoo's collection now included six foxes, four deer, two bears, two beavers, two coyotes, a porcupine, several raccoons, numerous rabbits, pheasants, owls and hawks. As the year wore on, more changes took place which caused the zoo's population to fluctuate.

The female bear died under cloudy circumstances, a pheasant was received from Arthur Hill of Tecumseh Avenue, and two of the red foxes died in December.

By the spring of 1920, more deaths had thinned the ranks in the zoo. The bear population had dropped to one male and the fox pen was reduced to a single occupant. Since its budget was restricted, the Parks Board appealed to the public to donate "acceptable" animals. Exotic creatures originating in tropical climates would not be accepted, nor would skunks. As an incentive, it was announced that anyone providing an animal would have their name inscribed on a sign attached to the front of their animal's cage, but this was not attractive enough to trigger a flood of donations. In April, a Great Blue Heron happened to land near the fountain in Victoria Park and the staff managed to catch the feisty bird with surprisingly little damage to its captors.

Springbank Park Zoo c1920. Courtesy of Library & Archives Canada.

Buffalo at Springbank Park Zoo c1920. Courtesy of Library & Archives Canada.

After the heron was delivered to Springbank, its flight feathers were clipped so it could not fly away when it was released in the deer enclosure.

In May of the same year, a hawk was added to the zoo, as well as a vixen for the lonely fox. Then, unforeseen excitement erupted after some new birds were put into the raccoons' cage and the displaced creatures were moved in with the porcupine. This proved to be an unhappy arrangement, for the raccoons promptly attacked the porcupine, but the bristly creature stood his ground and the sorry aggressors retired from combat, much the worse for wear. Inspector George Tustin of the Humane Society was called in to remove the quills and salve their wounds as the raccoons were moved to a safer place.[9]

London received a number of offers of animals for the zoo, but at significant prices. American and Canadian companies and zoos had specimens for sale, such as a 600 pound grizzly bear at a dollar per pound. The Washington Zoological Gardens had a pair of buffalo which they offered to sell for $250 each, as well as European brown bears at $60 apiece. Detroit had elk and various types of deer for sale, while Toronto would dispose of a buffalo for the bargain price of $150. Instead, Springbank Park's management waited and welcomed its first baby buffalo born on September 28, 1920, bringing the herd up to four.

By November, two brown bear cubs were added to the menagerie. This brought their total number up to five – the two brown cubs, Arthur Keene's two black cubs and "Bluebeard", the adult male black bear. At the same time, Fred J. Weldon, of Hyman Street, turned in a Great Horned Owl. He had shot it while on a hunting trip near Kettle Point but it was not seriously hurt. On other occasions, similarly injured animals, after being offered to the zoo, had not always survived.

We gain some insight into challenges experienced by the zoo's management in March of 1921 when General Manager E.V. Buchanan received an anonymous letter alleging that food which was "left to sour" on the floors of the cages had caused the deaths of some of the animals. While Buchanan agreed that this problem should be remedied, he told an *Advertiser* reporter that only six animals had died during the four years of the zoo's existence. He explained:

> *… Of these deaths, it is possible that some fault, such as the writer suggests, may have been responsible for the death of two foxes and one bear, but this is a point that cannot be proven.*
>
> *Every possible care known to those in charge of the animals is taken to insure their health and comfort.*
>
> *The other three deaths were due in two cases to accidents, and in one, that of the porcupine, to old age, the animal being quite aged when given to the zoo. The accidental deaths were those of a deer and a bear. In the case of the bear, it resulted from a wound caused by a bullet, the source of which was never found. The authorities are reluctant to believe that the shooting was done intentionally preferring to believe that the bullet was a stray one. The deer died as the result of being chased by a dog which got into the inclosure. In its efforts to escape from the dog the frightened animal made an effort to jump the nine-foot fence, but struck the wire, fracturing one of its legs. It was found necessary to shoot it.*[10]

By the spring of 1921 the zoo had four new bear cubs, one adult black bear, five deer, four buffalo, five raccoons, two beavers, one red fox, one porcupine, two golden pheasants, six wild geese, five drakes, one crane, one turkey buzzard, three owls and 12 rabbits. Many people visited the zoo on Good Friday when the four bear cubs kept their audiences entertained for hours. However, the two bull buffalo were vying for the attention of the lone female and the keepers were worried about the possibility of serious injuries. While an offer of $175 was made for one of the bulls by people in Bath, N.Y., transportation was an issue since the rail-way companies refused to accept the potentially unruly creature unless he was handed over to them securely crated. Unfortunately, the Parks officials were not certain they could do that safely. On May 23rd, a moose that was shipped from the Maritimes finally arrived at London's Grand Trunk Railway station. As a result of the long trip under confined conditions, it died at the station before the Parks Department could accept it. On a happier note, one of the red deer at the zoo gave birth to twins on the holiday weekend, and D.B. MacVicar, of 421 Oxford Street, donated a pair of quail in June. When Inspector Tustin of the Humane Society toured the facility, he gave it a passing grade.

E.V. Buchanan's pleas for donations yielded some better results by mid-July. Mrs. Ronald (Lorna) Harris, daughter of Sir George C. Gibbons, provided two black swans from Australia which were housed in the water fowl enclosure. Then Mayor Edgar S. Little donated a pair of Harbor Seals from Maine, and other gifts came in as well, making it necessary to move some of the animals to interim quarters until permanent ones could be built. During this juggling act, the seals were put into the beavers' pen, while the latter were moved into one of the bears' enclosures. The beavers promptly did what beavers do and gnawed down the eight-inch-thick tree stump that the bear cubs had enjoyed climbing.[11]

When the new quarters were ready for the four bears, three of them co-operated in the move by exiting through the open cage door into a large box for their transferal, but the fourth steadfastly refused to join its mates. The attendants remained outside the bars and chased "the pesky critter" most of the morning but gave up for fear of stressing it in the summer heat. The next morning, the bear continued to elude them until, finally, it was roped and tied securely for removal to the new pen. This area had a larger pool and a bigger tree stump for the animals to climb.


IS SPRINGBANK ZOO POPULAR?

The photo answers the question in the headline, showing adults and just a few children crowded around the new bear pit. *The London Advertiser*, Aug. 17, 1921 (front page).

After the Harbor Seals arrived, they went on a perplexing month-long fast, refusing to eat any of the food they were offered. The zookeepers were stymied until a young boy caught some minnows in the nearby Thames River and threw them into the seals' pond where they were promptly devoured. So all returned to normal once their preferred diet of live fish was established. Too often, animal management was a matter of trial and error at this stage in the zoo's existence.

The PUC's annual report for 1921 reflected significant changes at the zoo. While construction costs in 1920 had been $124.50, the final tally for 1921 was $1904.03. Maintenance costs remained about the same at $977.53 in 1920 and $1006.89 in 1921.

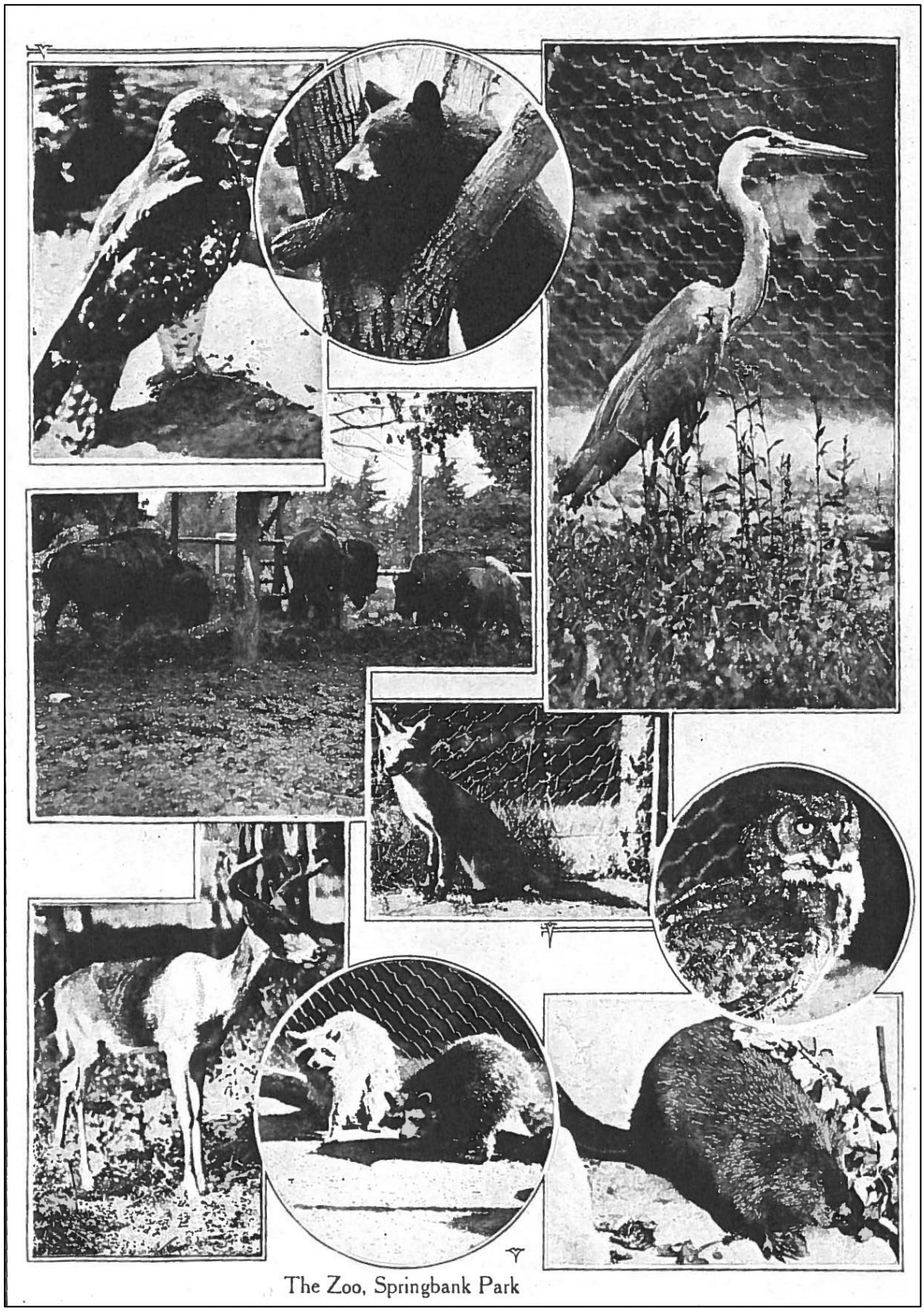
Unfortunately, the Springbank Park complex was not immune to depredations. A $50 reward was offered to anyone giving information leading to the arrest of the vandals who hit the park on June 18, 1922. In addition to the destruction of a beautifully designed flowerbed at the eastern entrance to the park, a fawn was discovered wandering at large, far from the deer enclosure. Worst of all, one of the black swans presented to the zoo the previous summer had disappeared. Nothing but some feathers were found. A reward remained open on any destructive acts in the future. In spite of this setback, a variety of donations continued to arrive, including the first peafowl.

In 1923, one of London's most eminent citizens, druggist and ornithologist William Edwin Saunders, invited W.H. Sheak to come to the city to investigate conditions at the zoo. The native of Indiana was an expert in the management of birds and animals in captivity. He was a consultant to such famous circuses as Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey. While the zoo had passed previous inspections by the Humane Society, W.E. Saunders, like other concerned citizens, had not been satisfied with affairs at the zoo. He told an *Advertiser* reporter that:

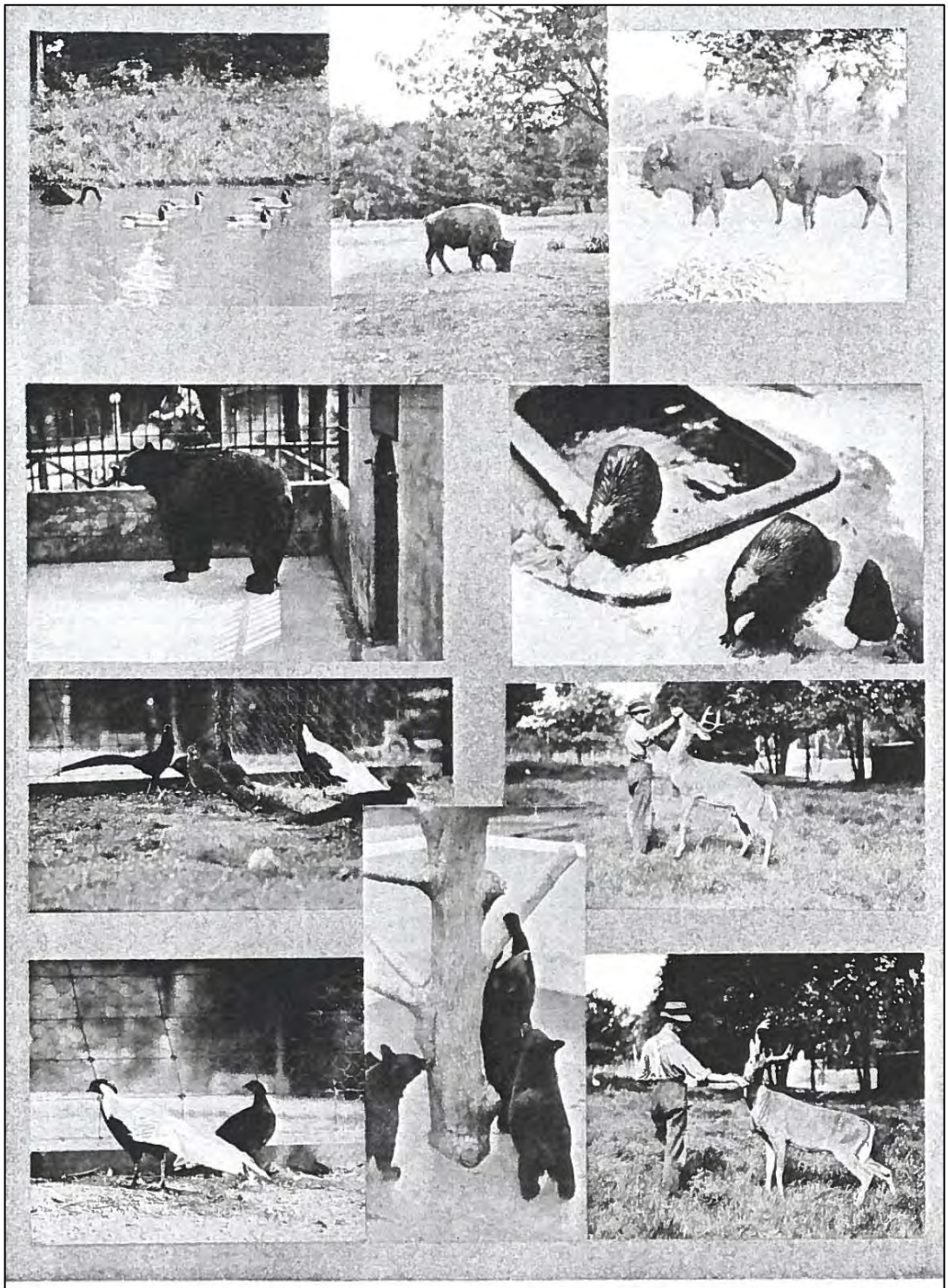
> "*The loss of bear cubs has been particularly noticeable, and, in fact the whole situation of the animals out there needs looking into, and should be put into the hands of some man who has a thorough knowledge of the subject. It is too important a job to be left in the hands of an amateur.*"[12]

Sheak started his inspection at Springbank on May 3rd and promptly pointed out a signage error, explaining that the "buffalo" were actually "bison". He also advised the attendants to stop feeding any more *"broken sweet biscuits"* since *"sugar is not good for animals at any time."* On the other hand, he complimented the official keeper, Charles McConnell, on doing a good job. In due time, Sheak compiled a list of recommendations for an improved feeding regimen as well as some better cage accommodations.

As 1923 drew to a close, the oldest female buffalo died unexpectedly, for it seemed that the people and the press continued to use the popular name for the animals. Then, Walter Wigmore, of 586 Waterloo Street, made a gift of his family's pet goat, "Billy". He was put in with the deer and the buffalo. When the deer first tried to greet him, he lowered his head and charged at them. Subsequently, every time he turned his head toward the deer, it was a signal for a mad dash for cover. It soon became obvious why the Wigmores had made their "generous" donation when his belligerent behaviour toward man and beast became apparent. He even attacked General Manager E.V. Buchanan!



PUC annual report, 1923, page 34.



GREAT ZOOS MAY GROW FROM A FEW OWLS AND SQUIRRELS

London claims no rivarly to Central Park Zoo, yet there are now scores of animals and birds in proper quarters—a feast for the eyes of every child, and a real surprise for the visitor, even if he be sophisticated.

PUC annual report, 1923, page 31.

On April 15, 1924, *The London Free Press* reported that Billy:

"Has made his home with everything at the zoo, …and he has conquered them all. He's now in a pen with some wild ducks and they are getting wilder." However, Billy was soon moved into maximum security where "*the most troublesome inmate on the grounds*" had his very own pen where "*the fence is of special wire and the entire enclosure is constructed of much more substantial material than even that of the buffalo or the bears.*"

One of W.H. Sheak's recommendations had been to provide larger, more natural surroundings for the raccoons. As a result, they were moved into a new enclosure with a huge maple tree in its centre. Since the staff had neglected to trim off the lower branches, the raccoons soon figured out how to use them to make their escape and happily wandered about the park for some time before being recaptured.

The zoo experienced a high mortality rate in 1924. A buffalo represented the largest loss, while two deer, a peacock, and various water fowl also died. On the positive side, C.L. Wilson of Exeter managed to catch a Bald Eagle that was attacking his hens and eventually turned the huge bird over to the zoo after exhibiting it at various fall fairs. Then, John Moule, of 67 Becher Street, who was London's police court clerk, donated two swans he had obtained from Pinafore Park in St. Thomas. He was a bird fancier who had a large private collection.

The long-awaited arrival of a pair of elk from Wainwright, Alberta, came in late November. Arrangements had been made by PUC Commissioner Thomas W. McFarland with London's federal M.P., J.F. "Frank" White, who had contacted the Hon. Charles Stewart, Minister of the Interior, for the donation of the elk. They were put in their own area at the west end of the animal enclosures.

Once again, John Moule helped to arrange for a donation, this time it was a red fox from Daniel Joyes, of 612 Hamilton Road. Less than two weeks later, in mid-December, zookeeper Charles McConnell discovered the theft of two red foxes and several raccoons. Footprints in the snow led to their discarded carcasses on the river bank, then to a nearby house in Byron,[13] but the suspects and the pelts were gone. Dr. Harry A. Stevenson, of 391 Dundas Street, promptly replaced the raccoons with three that he had raised.

The annual report for 1924 had listed total zoo expenses of $3,768.72, while 1925 showed a considerable drop in construction costs and some reduction in maintenance expenses for a total of $2,626.22. Expenses rose again in 1926 to $3,311.40.

The pattern of losses and gains continued through the 1920s. The oldest male bear died early in 1925, then a younger male killed a female in May, an alligator died that fall, and John Moule made his second donation of a pair of swans in early December. An unusual number of Arctic or Snowy Owls were captured by area residents in the autumn of 1926 and the zoo's aviary grew as a result. That same year, another male bear died. Two monkeys were received in the spring of 1927 and the beavers surprised everyone by producing their first two offspring after 10 years at the zoo.[14]

Through the co-operation of John S. Moore, manager of the London & Western Trusts Company, the zoo received seven young pheasants in the fall of 1927. Earlier in the year, Moore had obtained 33 fertilized pheasant eggs from the zoo's aviary and took them to his summer cottage at Port Stanley where he used several bantam hens to do the hatching. After weasels killed all but 14 of the young birds, Moore shared them equally with Springbank. He also donated a red fox as a replacement for one that had got its neck caught in the wire mesh of the fence and died of strangulation.[15]

City bylaws regulating animal ownership were quite lax in previous days, making it possible for people to keep a variety of wild animals on their property. Around 1922, Milton Jackson, the owner of Jackson Cleaners and Dyers, had bought a "South American honey bear" as a pet for his son from William D. Christianson, manager of the F.W. Woolworth Co. store. The Jacksons lived at 250 St. James St. and Christianson lived a few blocks away at 764 Waterloo St. The Jackson home, on the north-east corner of Alma and St. James streets, had a small structure in the backyard for the bear.[16] By 1928, young Jackson had grown up and no longer had time for the bear, so it was donated to the zoo, and another unwanted pet found a refuge.

After the stock market crash of 1929, financial affairs were adversely affected everywhere for the next decade. London's austerity budgeting meant that the zoo received less money rather than more all through the great depression. Because of a lack of space in 1930, two bear cubs were left in the same pen with their father who killed them. Unable to sell the old male to another zoo, authorities sent him to be butchered. Since there was a real need for improved accommodations, E.V. Buchanan and T.W. McFarland visited the Detroit Zoo once again in search of better ideas for the bears' quarters. Despite the challenges, two new cubs were born early in 1931 bringing the total number of the zoo's most popular inmates up to five.

But animals were not the only ones at risk in the park. As the result of an accident at Springbank on September 18, 1930, George Martyn, a local auto mechanic, sued the City of London for $10,000 and Justice Wright heard the case on May 19, 1931. Martyn testified that he was walking beside the buffalo enclosure when one of the animals smashed through an interior wooden guard rail and hit the stretchy wire fence, injuring him. After both sides in the case completed their legal arguments, the judge awarded Martyn $912 for personal injuries and expenses. This sort of thing had not happened before - just an occasional nip on a finger by an over-eager monkey trying to get treats. A young man had been charged with throwing stones at the bears, but this was the first time the City had to pay for an accident at the zoo.

Overcrowding in some of the enclosures continued into 1932. One new bear den was built that year and officials managed to ship two young elk to the Kirkland Lake game reserve for the Department of Game and Fisheries. Although the PUC tried to sell or trade bears, buffalo and elk, they met with very little success. As a result, they were forced to find different solutions. Under a special license from the Ontario Government, two city police officers shot four young elk at the park on December 16th. The carcasses were trucked to Alderman Harry Bottrill's abattoir where they were butchered and 800 pounds of meat was turned over to the City's relief department for distribution to the unemployed.

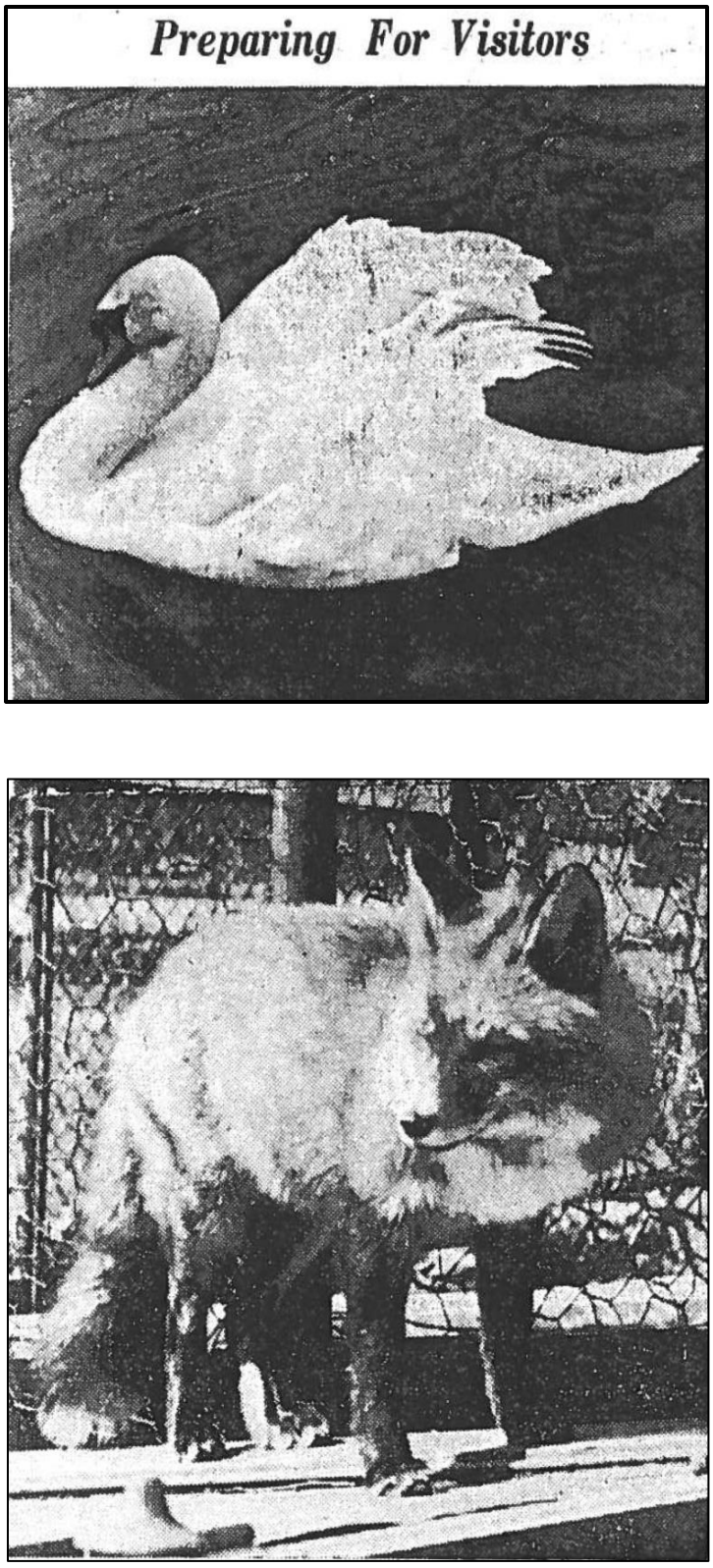
However, a small improvement to life at the zoo had been made for the welfare of the furless monkeys and any sick animals during the cold winter months. They were housed in a new two-storey concrete block building where fodder was stored in the lower level and electric heaters kept the animals comfortable in the area above.

Parks Superintendent W.E."Ted" Foster announced that the high price of hay, at $20 a ton, was causing a serious problem for the zoo. Although the Parks Department grew as much feed as possible, the buffalo, elk and deer needed a constant supply of hay which was beyond the department's ability to provide. In addition, the City's grant to the zoo had been cut while the price of hay had risen. With this in mind, Foster warned that another cull might be

the only solution since no other zoos needed London's surplus animals. As a result, just before Christmas of 1934, after government permission was received, three bears and five elk were slaughtered and the meat was distributed to 150 families in need. It was noted that the meat was of the highest quality since all the animals had been raised in captivity and fed on grain and hay, like domesticated cattle. The bear meat was said to taste like mutton and the elk meat even better than beef![17]

1935 marked the last year that Springbank Park was serviced by the London Street Railway's line. It was no longer a paying proposition. The zoo remained much the same over the next several years with few additions of special note. London rejected a suggestion from the Sault Ste. Marie Parks Department in 1936 that London might take two of its wolves. Officials recalled how unpopular a pair of coyotes/wolves had been some years earlier, as neighbours for miles around had objected to their nightly howling.

When it became known that the Lord Mayor of London, England, would be attending the opening of the new Canadian National Railways station in London, Ontario, on September 1, 1936, Dr. Hugh Stevenson, a board member of the PUC, contacted authorities in England about a gift of a pair of royal swans. Since the birds are wards of the crown and have special protection on the other Thames River, it seemed like an apt gift on this special occasion. In due course, four swans were shipped across the Atlantic and arrived in advance of the auspicious day when Lord Mayor Sir Percy Vincent made their formal presentation in this London. Unfortunately, one of the new arrivals died on September 4th and a second one succumbed the following February, but the other two survived for a number of years.



Springtime at Springbank. A fox in his den and the swan taking a swim in the Thames River. *The Free Press*, April 11, 1935.

A day before the Lord Mayor's visit, it was discovered that most of the zoo's geese had disappeared. Not wanting to put on a poor show of welcoming the royal swans to the water fowl enclosure, a keeper took the resident Chinese goose up the river and released it. As it paddled around, it honked repeatedly, calling for its errant companions. An hour later, it returned with the missing geese in tow and the welcoming committee was back to full strength. E.V. Buchanan vouched for the truth of this story.[18]

ROYAL SWANS SWIM IN SPRINGBANK POOL

Gift From Citizens of Old London in Keeping of P. U. C. Officials

London Advertiser, Aug. 27, 1936 (page 9).

Some long-overdue changes at the park had been made by the spring of 1937. One year earlier, the PUC had finally given approval for the construction of a new wild fowl enclosure to be built around a pond near the zoo. In addition, a new road was built from the pumphouse to the pavilion over the former route of the dismantled street railway tracks. It went through the most densely wooded areas at the westerly end of the park, past the new bird section and between the elk and deer enclosures. An old barn at the extreme west end near Byron had been removed and a new picnic area was under development.

Two of the zoo's fun-loving monkeys, known as Tweedle-Dum and Tweedle-Dee, died under tragic circumstances on March 18th as the result of a fire. They had captivated the interest of every child who had come within earshot of the monkey cage with their tricks and line of chatter. Now their mischievous nonsense had come to an end. Their bodies were found that morning in their winter quarters as the fire still smouldered. The keepers said they had died as a result of smoke inhalation, while a third monkey was still alive but in serious condition.

Apparently the animals were playing with the shavings on the floor of their cage and scattered some on the electric heater below them. The shavings caught fire and burned a hole through the floor. Subsequently, some embers dropped into a large barrel in the basement of the winter house setting fire to it and its contents. The resulting smoke suffocated two of the animals above. Thankfully, a number of purebred dogs and several guinea pigs that were lodged in the same area suffered no ill effects.

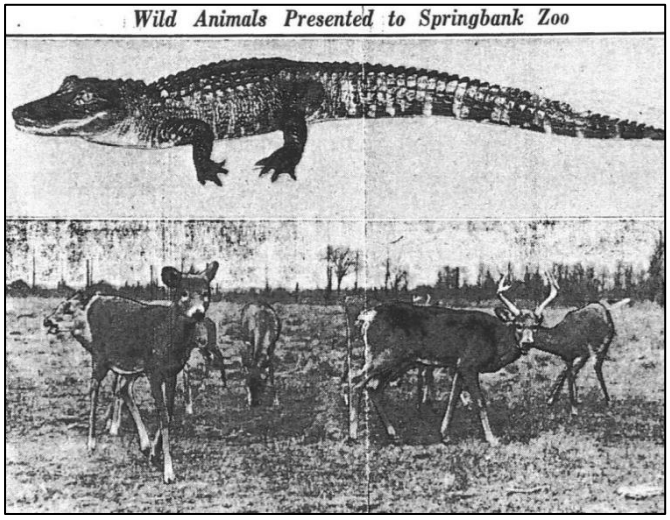
Animals at Springbank Zoo Get Many Tidbits

Animals in the Springbank zoo have been receiving good treatment from the hundreds who visit the park daily. In fact they received so many tidbits that they almost refuse to sample the daily rations handed out by the zoo attendants. The above photos were taken at the zoo yesterday by a Free Press cameraman. Top left—Some of the members of the raccoon colony fraternizing with those who were feeding them peanuts. Top right—The bear cubs born in February of this year have been receiving much attention. They are shown on the inside of their cage as they watched for odd bits of food, particularly ice cream, from visitors. Bottom—This little girl had her doll tucked under one arm as she fed the guinea pigs who appeared to be quite tame. This charming visitor was having a great time when photographed.

Photos show visitors enjoying the zoo at Springbank. Racoons are at top left, bear cubs at top right and at bottom the guinea pigs. *The Free Press*, July 22, 1937.

A curiosity was to be found in one of the outer enclosures, for a pure white deer was living among the regular ones. He was born in captivity and looked normal in all respects except for his lack of colour. He seemed to be accepted totally by his darker, spotted cousins.

Late that year, E.M. Burke of Lambeth donated two deer, an alligator and several varieties of geese to the zoo.


Wild Animals Presented to Springbank Zoo

Shown above is the alligator and deer donated by E.M. Burke. The alligator was 64 years old despite the fact that it was only three feet six inches long. The deer are shown grazing on the Burke estate, from which two were selected for the zoo. *The Free Press*, Nov. 19, 1937.

For several years, the peahen had not sat on her eggs after laying them, so no new progeny had been hatched. In 1938, however, a keeper collected each egg as it was laid and sent it to an incubator. As a result, six young peacocks were running around the bird enclosure by August. In spite of this one bright spot, most of the needed changes, particularly for the bears, had not been made because of funding cutbacks. Their concrete cages with bars and wire were outdated and small. Only one buffalo remained by late in the year and a black fox was well past his prime. A worrisome trend was noted by Parks Superintendent Ted Foster in the PUC's annual report:

> *"There seems to be a general decline in attendance during the past few years at the park. This has been brought about, more or less, by the elimination of the street railway service to and from the park. The amount spent each year on beautification, maintenance and the upkeep of the Zoo, surely warrants some kind of public road service from the city to the park."*

Since the bears' enclosures had changed minimally, a bear cub, "Winnie the Pooh", born early in 1939 was left in the same cage with both of his parents. In the past, cubs had been taken away from any adult males for safety reasons. Thankfully, all went well this time.

Later in the season, three cygnets were hatched by the surviving pair of royal swans and later still, two elks were born. However, it was decided that it would cost too much to provide "Daisybelle", the lone buffalo, with any new companions – so the fate of that herd was sealed.

In 1940, as a wartime precaution, Reservoir Hill overlooking Springbank, was closed to pedestrian and vehicular traffic by the Parks Department. Guards were posted to protect the large reservoirs that were an important part of the city's water supply, but the park below remained open to the public.[19] After barely surviving the austerity of the 1930s, the zoo faced more lean years during World War II. By 1945, there were 45 animals and 60 birds housed at Springbank.

Now Is Good Time To Visit the Animals At Springbank Zoo

The above pictures were taken in Springbank Zoo, west of London. At the top is Charles McConnell, for 22 years superintendent of the zoo, giving some of his curious fowl their daily dose of vitamins, via lettuce, which he is shaking out of the bag. Below is Marlene Hammond, 10 Argyle street, London, offering a raccoon a colored button; the 'coon is reaching and obviously trying to say: "Ah, please, lemme have it." Raccoons like to handle things and have tremendous curiosity.

BY W. G. TRESTAIN

The Free Press, April 2, 1940.

'Grandpa', the big and elderly male bear at Springank Zoo, sitting by the edge of his drinking pool in the springtime and grumbling. *The Free Press*, Apr. 5, 1940.

Fun fact!

Shown above is the old male bear named 'Grandpa', also referred to as a 'fourflusher'. He was known for snorting and roaring in a 'terrible way'. The article accompanying the above picture told the tale of the Free Press roving reporter's surprise when he dropped his wristwatch into the bear pit! Zoo superintendent Charles McConnell "just went in and picked up the watch." Although Grandpa roared and made lunges at him, McConnell brandished a rake and Grandpa quickly sat down in a corner roaring and waving his large paws. Grandpa was a big bluffer!

A letter to the editor of *The London Free Press* was published on July 28, 1945, from "AN AMERICAN TOURIST" which put a glaring spotlight on the zoo's bears.

> *Editor Free Press: I recently drove through Springbank Park at Byron and stopped a few minutes to have a look at the bears. My family and I have regretted having done so ever since, as the thought of what we saw has haunted us ever since.*
>
> *It was a hot day and there were the unfortunate and mangy-looking bears in a sunken cement pit in which the heat must have been awful, to say the least. They could not see beyond the four walls of their small pen nor could any breeze reach them.*
>
> *To top it all their small drinking trough was covered with green scum, and as anyone knows, water has to stand unchanged for a considerable time to get in that condition.*
>
> *It is bad enough when so-called civilized people, and here of course I include my own country, will lock up wild animals but that the conditions under which those poor harmless bears are destined to spend the rest of their lives, are allowed to exist is sad indeed.*
>
> *Why does their cage have to be in the full glare of the sun when the park has lots of shady spots?*
>
> *Come on, Londoners, put a stop to this blot on your city and countryside.*

It was not just the outdated bear pits that were in question. E.V. Buchanan said in September: *"This is a matter of policy and it is up to the commission to decide whether we are going to have a zoo or not."* At the end of the year, the PUC adopted a report prepared by J. Bevan Hay, the new chairman of the Parks Commission, which included recommendations to do away with a number of the older and sickly animals, demolish their cages and rebuild a modern new zoo elsewhere in the park.

But citing a postwar shortage of men and materials early in 1946, E.V. Buchanan announced that no new zoo would be built that year. The old bear pits and cages had been dismantled over the winter and the aging animals had been shot. Although some of the deer and birds were kept, the beavers finally met their end. The paving of Springbank's neglected roads took precedence over animals that summer while officials continued to issue hopeful statements about a utopian zoo in the future – but nothing happened.

Although several types of animals and birds remained on view to the public, the elk herd became a memory in January of 1952. The last buck had died several years earlier, so Parks Superintendent Ted Foster got a man to shoot the remaining cows and take the carcasses away. Subsequently, the elk pasture was turned into three new picnic areas. By 1955 there were only a few monkeys and birds left at Springbank, but when a doe was rescued from the riverbank near the Ridout Street bridge, she was given a home at the zoo. Shortly after that, the Ontario Department of Lands and Forests donated a buck. As a result, a fawn was born to "Bambi" and "Rudolph" in 1956, followed by twins in 1957. However, city councillors criticized the sorry display provided by the remaining livestock which were housed in a few overgrown enclosures. The unkempt foliage prevented the public from seeing much of anything that was in them. Finally, the zoo's tipping point had been reached.

In 1957, the PUC formed a new committee for the development of parks and recreational facilities. In order to get the first project under way, it reviewed information on "children's fairylands" from Oakland and Montreal.

Ferris Would Use Disputed $185,000 To Establish Zoo, Improve Springbank

By LES SMITH
Free Press Staff Reporter

Use of a disputed hydro sinking fund of $185,000 to establish a small zoo and to improve conditions generally at Springbank Park was urged today by Ald. Terry Ferris.

The fund is claimed both by the city and the PUC.

Municipal officials say it belongs to the city since investments by the treasurer built it up to its present level. The PUC has always carried the hydro money on its books.

Ald. Ferris, who Monday touched off a controversy over conditions at the park, said a small zoo housing native animals like bison, deer, and beavers, and typical Canadian birds is sorely needed.

He said, too, that there should be more amusements for children and suggested a "fantasy land" containing models depicting familiar nursery rhymes.

The alderman said: "It is obvious that my criticism struck home. I'm not perturbed about the criticism handed me for what I said. The public would echo my statements."

Ald. Ferris said the present policy regarding concessions should be reconsidered and revenue from properly-run concessions would go a long way toward maintenance costs of a zoo.

"Improvements of this nature would reap dividends," he said, "perhaps not in dollars and cents, but in service to the public."

The Free Press, May 30, 1957.

When "Storybook Gardens" opened in June of 1958, some of the zoo's remaining animals were incorporated into its new displays. Fortunately, when fire destroyed the theme park's Old MacDonald's Barn early in 2015, all the animals escaped unharmed and were sent to appropriate shelters outside the city. One hundred years after the first raccoons had arrived at the zoo, London officially closed its last chapter on live animals at Springbank Park, although hundreds of Canada Geese continue to ignore the policy.

In 2016, a number of long-time Londoners were asked to recount their memories of the zoo. They all mentioned the bears and their distinctive odour. Several people described their cages with concrete floors, small pools, iron bars and wire on three sides, while the fourth side, at the rear, housed a dank, concrete room. Others recalled the colourful peacocks fanning their magnificent tails and emitting their raucous calls which echoed throughout the park. One man described his fascination with the owls that seemed to rotate their heads in a circle, and others loved watching the graceful deer.

Everyone spoke of their zoo experiences in connection with other activities at Springbank, for it has always been a popular destination which has provided the public with many recreational choices. Over the years there was an amusement park with various rides and booths, a dance pavilion, live outdoor theatre, extensive picnic and athletic grounds, pony rides, pedal boats, docking facilities for steam boats that brought passengers from downtown London, the street railway line, walking and running routes, a drinking fountain bubbling with odoriferous sulphur water, the carousel, a wading pool, many beautiful gardens, a skateboarding site, an ice skating area, and the ever-popular miniature train which has transported untold thousands of children, young and old, around its circular track.

Some of these attractions have come and gone, but each generation of visitors to Springbank Park savours what it has to offer. With the passing of time, Col. Leys' role in expanding the park's development has faded from memory, but when he proposed his idea for a zoo, he planted a seed that came to fruition and countless people were delighted by his legacy.

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Ivey Family London Room, London Public Library, Annual Report of the Public Utilities Commission to the Municipal Council of the City of London, 1914-1958.

Endnotes

1. *The London Free Press*, July 21, 1902, p. 8.
2. *The London Advertiser*, July 23, 1902, p. 6.
3. *The London Free Press,* Aug. 13, 1915, p. 3.
4. *Ibid,* Aug. 5, 1916, p. 2.
5. *The London Advertiser,* Aug. 21, 1916, p. 12; *The London Free Press,* Aug. 22, 1916, pp. 3 and 11.
6. *The London Advertiser,* Mar. 30, 1917, p. 3.
7. *The London Free Press,* June 5, 1918, p. 2.
8. *Ibid,* Feb. 26, 1919, p. 2.
9. *Ibid,* May 18, 1920, p. 18.
10. *The London Advertiser,* March 4, 1921, p. 4.
11. *Ibid,* July 21, 1921, p. 3.
12. *Ibid,* May 3, 1923, p. 2.
13. *The London Free Press,* Dec. 16, 1924, p. 2.
14. *Ibid,* June 2, 1927, p. 1.
15. *Ibid,* Nov. 1, 1927, p. 2.
16. Western Archives, Western University, 1912 rev. 1922, Fire Insurance Plans of the City of London, Ontario, sheet No. 31.
17. *The London Advertiser,* Dec. 20, 1934, p. 1.
18. *Ibid,* Sept. 2, 1936, p. 12.
19. *The London Free Press,* May 20, 1940, p. 2.

Springbank Park Zoo, c1920. Courtesy of Library and Archives Canada.

London and Port Stanley Railway exit to Richmond Street Dec.1931. Seen on the tracks is locomotive 852 (2-6-0 F7a). Courtesy of The Canadian Museum of Science and Technology (STR29577).

London's "Subways"

Mike Rice

The word "subway" conjures up images of a heavy rail transport system underneath the city. However, in Canada, during the first half of the 20th century, "subway" referred to a road going underneath a railway right-of-way. In London, Ontario, we have two subways, Wellington Street and Richmond Street, both under Canadian National Railway (C.N.R.) tracks.

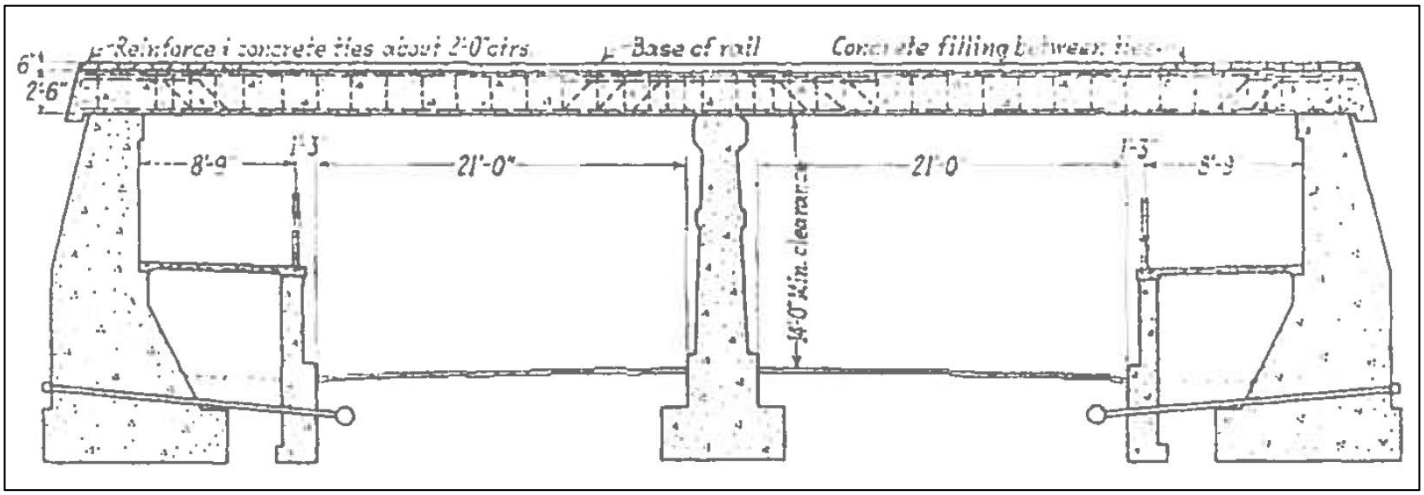
As with many large building projects, there is an interesting and fascinating past. Due to the amount of work involved to create the subways a four unit construction project was required. The units were the G.T.R./C.N.R. station, Richmond Street subway, Wellington Street subway, and Maitland Street subway. For the purpose of this article G.T.R. refers to the time period before 1923 and the Canadian National Railway (C.N.R.) refers to after 1923.

While four main sites were chosen for the subways, other locations in the city were also suggested where subways would be beneficial. Residents were asking for a subway on the Grand Trunk Railway (G.T.R.) at Ashland Avenue in east London. As discussions began to develop in London about possible subways, the G.T.R. along with several other railways were merged, and the new railway was called Canadian National Railway (C.N.R.) The citizens of London, represented by J.K. Little, appeared before the Board of Control of the City of London and made their presentation. The request was passed, and as a result City Council asked for an order to be issued by Dominion Railway Commission. The Commission's purpose was to look after all affairs relating to the railways. *"The cost of the subway had not [been] definitely estimated, but in making the application the City apparently will be liable for the entire expenditure."*[1]

"Says G.T.R. will build subway"[2]

As discussions continued about the proposed project, Controller J.P. Moore gave an interview to the *London Advertiser*, and referred to the subway under Ridout Street. He, also, suggested the City make an application to the Dominion Railway Commission.

> *"...We have reliable though indirect information that the Grand Trunk will ask for such a subway, and in this way the cost will be saddled upon the company and upon the street railway. If the city made the application, we would have to pay a portion of the cost. The building of a subway at Ridout Street at the city's instigation might block a movement for elevated tracks later as the Railway Commission could say that we had the subway and did not need anything else."*



Longitudinal section through Richmond Street Bridge showing general details of construction.
Courtesy of Railway Age, page 356, Sept. 10, 1932.

The G.T.R. typically handed out five-year leases on pieces of its property which in the opinion of many citizens, indicated that the company would not be prepared to go ahead with any improvement plan. One person in the know lamented the following:

> *"You will see that the Grand Trunk will not do anything in London for five or ten years, and in the mean-time we will continue to drift along without the Ridout Street subway accommodation that we so greatly need. The time to make a move is now, and it is up to Council to act."*[3]

At this point the subways for Wellington and Richmond Street had officially been decided, however the Ridout Street phase had not progressed further than initial discussions. When G.T.R. officials visited London for the funeral of Cy Warman (a high ranking G.T.R. official); they were approached and asked about the Ridout subway, since it was such a popular topic with citizens. The G.T.R. officials shut down future hopes however with their response, *"London had her chance once, but did not want it. The Grand Trunk had money to spend here, but that money is now being spent in other places, with the result that it is not available."*[4] This statement was made at a time of rate cutting by the Dominion Railway Commission.

With the building of a subway, as with many large municipal construction projects, lawyers were involved. City Solicitor T.G. Meredith K.C. was to meet with J.P. Pratt, solicitor, and T.T. Irving, Chief Engineer of Central Region of the C.N.R. The purpose of the meeting was to present a revised agreement on grade separation, the process of aligning a junction of two or more surface transport axes at different heights to avoid disrupting traffic flow on other routes when they cross each other. The agreement specified that the total project would be completed by 1945. The Maitland Street subway was to be one of those units. The agreement specified that there would be four units to the construction project consisting of the following: a $700,000 new station and office building, Richmond Street subway, Wellington Street subway, and Maitland Street subway. All were to be completed sometime in 1933, except the Maitland Street subway. The first part of the project, the station and track elevation was to be given high priority, *"a clause is being inserted as agreed upon by the C.N.R. guaranteeing protection for the London & Port Stanley Railway in regards to freight facilities".*[5] According to the *London Free Press* the meeting between legal counsel occurred in August of 1929 as the C.N.R. solicitor was to be in London on Aug. 13 or 15. Both dates were kept open to go over the agreement clause by clause. In the meantime the grade (or project) committee which included City Council members *"made some changes in the phrasing of a number of clauses while the section providing for a Maitland Street subway to be constructed at some future period when the Railway Commission is convinced of its necessity was altered with a definite date inserted".*[6] Following the agreement review, further details emerged. Due to the changes made to the agreement, it was decided that the City and C.N.R. would share the cost of the Maitland Street subway. The consensus was that a joint application would be approved by the Railway Commission and construction would start on one unit first which at the time was not specified. The last detail to emerge was that Talbot Street would be closed because of the construction for the elevation of the tracks.

Construction begins at Wellington and Richmond Streets 1931. Courtesy of Western Archives, Western University (RC41958).

Construction Begins

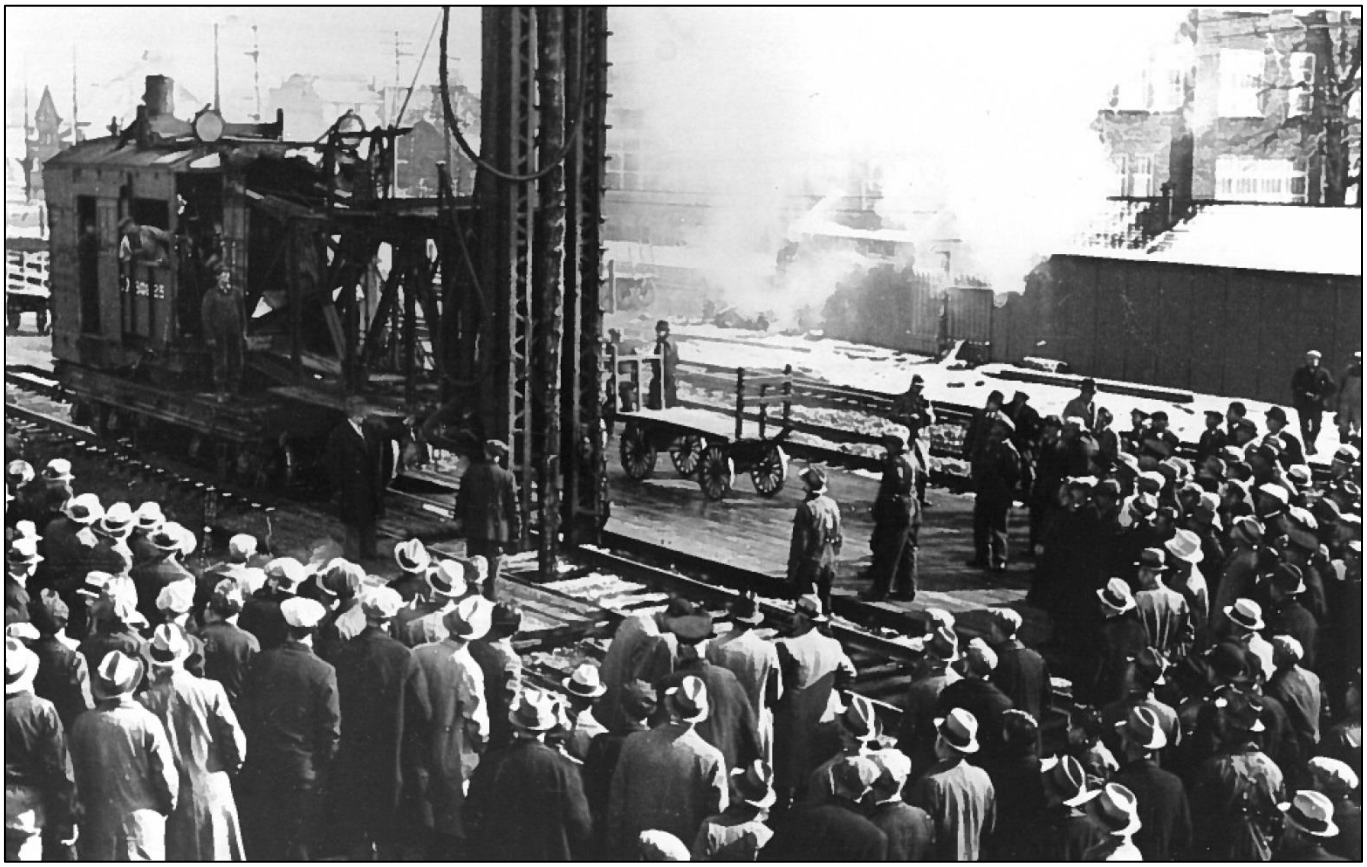
Construction began with a controversial decision by C.N.R.to purchase the McLaughlin Buick building for $50,000; at Bathurst and Richmond Streets. Sources at McLaughlin Buick stated that the company would move to a new location. The general understanding was that it would be cheaper for the C.N.R. to purchase the building and demolish it rather than reinforce the foundation due to structural issues. The work to acquire another building was to start Jan. 23, 1931. The Scott-McHale building, located directly opposite the McLaughlin Buick property, was obtained for use of the building and not just the property, however it needed improvements. The building needed:

> *"... a new foundation under the northern portion of the building and a heavy abutment wall along Richmond and Bathurst Streets because of the fact that the subway will be lower the present foundation of the building."*[7]

G.H. Rayner, general superintendent of W.H. Yates Construction Company of Hamilton, further stated *"Equipment will arrive in London as soon as can be assembled and shipped here and the construction will proceed as rapidly as possible."*[8] Regarding workers, Mr. Raynor *explained "only a small number of men will be required but as work progresses and the evacuation for the subway is begun, more men will be used in as many cases as possible in accordance with the contract."*[9] Mr. Raynor further went on to say that *"the Richmond and Wellington Street subways will be construct[ed] at the same time or as closely as the company can do so, and excavation in either case will be started at the earliest possible date."*[10]

With each major construction project there was a ceremonial start. The Wellington and Richmond Street subways' official start began at two o'clock in the afternoon on Jan. 16, 1931. The ceremony was led by Mayor George Hayman. C.N.R. officials, parliamentary representatives and Yates Company officials were also in attendance. The speeches were short and took place just west of Bathurst Street on Richmond Street. Before the ceremonies started, preliminary work began with the placement of barricades at various streets shortly before noon the same day. Barricades closed Richmond Street at York Street and Bathurst Street at Richmond Street. Originally Clarence Street was to be left open for a few days as construction began, but it was decided to permanently close it due to the agreement between C.N.R. and the City of London. The officials talked about the cost of the grade separation scheme - a figure of $4,000,000. This building project was mammoth, and the largest in London's history. The Mayor had the honour of driving the first "pile" (a large length of tree trunk used for shoring up slopes needed for the grading process). This work required street closures and the rerouting of streetcars and buses. The Richmond and Oxford routes were diverted to run east instead of south on Richmond Street. The Oxford route saw a reduction in service. An additional bus was added to the Hamilton Road route increasing it from five to six buses. Wellington Street buses were rerouted to Waterloo Street, crossed the tracks and then proceeded to Bathurst Street to Wellington Street.

Changes were made to Richmond Street to prepare for the construction, however it was not closed to pedestrians. Fifty feet east of the intersection wooden planking was laid down, going part way to the temporary London & Port Stanley station also, it was used by pedestrians wanting to travel along Richmond Street.



Pile-driver equipment is used in first phase of construction at Wellington and Richmond Streets 1931.
Courtesy of Western Archives, Western University (RC40323).

An area of planking was available for the London Street Railway patrons on the south side of York Street. Street car overhead wires were removed along with embedded rails and diamonds. Also affected was the taxi stand in front of the London Shoe building which previously had allowed for two United taxis and two independent taxis to be located on the south side of York Street at the corner of Richmond Street. During the construction a temporary taxi stand was located on Clarence Street at the C.N.R. platform.

Employment

During the subway construction, skilled labour was required for the underpinning of adjacent buildings.

> *"At an early hour 250 men seeking jobs at the C.N.R. intersections, many of these being from out of town and therefore ineligible for this work… A great number of unemployed men had gathered, but all men being taken on are being sent from the un-employment bureau. According to the contracts all labor is to be supplied by Londoners."*[11]

The inexperienced were not completely left out: some would be hired as general labourers as work progressed. The unemployment bureau on Carling Street sent men to C.N.R. subway. At the bureau, lists were prepared and arranged so that no time was lost in supplying men. Many requests came by mail from all types of workers looking for work. Local civic works were sped up, *"According to City Engineer Near the civic construction for 1931 is apt to be lighter than usual."*[12] This C.N.R. construction and the reconstruction of Victoria Hospital were seen by many as steady employment in the economically challenged 1930s.

As work continued additional streets were closed including Wellington Street over the C.N.R. During the week of Jan. 27, 1931 more equipment arrived in London.

> *"An industrial railway will be built from east of Wellington Street to Richmond Street."*[13]

Many unemployed men were interviewed by C.N.R. Resident Engineer Sydney G. Smith; he could not do the hiring as all workmen were engaged by the local unemployment bureau. While material and equipment were arriving in London, the pile driver was making progress.

"Pile-Driver cause crash of stove pipes"[14] screamed the headline in the *London Advertiser* on Jan. 28, 1931. The ticket agent was surprised when a long section of stovepipe crashed in the CNR ticket office. The office was sixty feet away, and the vibration of the pile-driver was not anticipated there. The stove pipes were re-erected and reinforced to avoid further disrupt-ion, and business returned to normal. Over at the McLaughlin-Buick building expensive plate glass windows were removed and an "*inside wooden shelter is being erected to keep out the cold*."[15]

As work continued, the pile-driver had to be positioned carefully to avoid contact with high tension wires. The road-bed of the London & Port Stanley portion of the road at Richmond Street had to be reconstructed during the project and was filled in with gravel. In addition falsework additional wall construction to provide support during the pouring of concrete. This work commenced on Jan. 28, 1931. Progress was rapid and details about the pile-driver were detailed in the Jan. 29 edition of the *London Free Press*.

The trestle was erected quickly across Richmond Street. So quickly in fact that The London & Port Stanley Railway began service as early as noon on Jan. 29, 1931. An incredible amount of work went into this phase, specifically using the pile-driver. Each pile measured about 25 feet with a total of 48 piles.

Richmond Street looking south Dec. 1931. Courtesy of The Canadian Museum of Science and Technology (STR29575).

Richmond Street looking north Dec. 1931, showing the London & Port Stanley bridge. Courtesy of The Canadian Museum of Science and Technology (STR29581a).

Richmond Street exit to Bathurst Street looking north, Dec 1931. On the bridge is train 852 2-6-0 E7a. Courtesy of The Canadian Museum of Science and Technology (STR29576).

Richmond Street looking north-west from London and Port Stanley Railway entrance, Dec. 1931. Courtesy of The Canadian Museum of Science and Technology (STR29588a).

The last pile to be driven caused some problems. Work was stopped temporarily because of a solid block of concrete was found, part of the foundation of the old Catalano and Sansone business. The workers had to dig down five feet, as well as around it to finally move the concrete block.

After the pile-driver finished at Richmond Street; it was moved to Wellington Street to continue construction work there. However, this work was delayed as re-work was needed first. Unfortunately in all the excitement to keep the project moving, the water mains weren't replaced as planned. The site had to be excavated again and water mains dug up and replaced before work could continue at Wellington Street. As a result final plans for the subway at Wellington were delayed because the pile-driver was scheduled for work in Windsor for Jan.29, 1931. Other track work in London continued in the meantime. This included moving the C.N.R. siding at Clarence Street to a vacant lot for the purpose of handling the materials and equipment of the Yates Company, who was also erecting an office at the corner of Clarence Street and the C.N.R.

"Two Motorists Mired In Subway"[16]

> *"Drivers Fail To See Barricades - Have To Be Pulled Out"[17]*
>
> *"Two motorists driving from the south entrance through the Richmond Street subway were marooned in the heavy mud on the north slope last night and early this morning. The south entrance is paved while the north end is still to be finished and barricaded. Apparently the drivers failed to notice the barricade and kept right ongoing. It was necessary to obtain assistance to pull these cars out."[18]*

Opening Ceremonies

On the evening of Nov. 30, 1931 Mayor Hayman along with other dignitaries officially opened the Wellington Street subway. Despite the delays earlier in the year, this phase was completed and worthy of a celebration. The dignitaries lead a parade of the band of the First Hussars, they were greeted by a crowd of several thousand people. Festivities started at 7:45 p.m. Speeches were made. These speeches touched on the past, and talked about the numerous accidents between vehicles and trains that occurred before the creation of the subways. They then talked about hopes for the future now that this major phase of the project was completed. After the speeches ended a street dance began. The citizens of London awaited the next phase of the project, the opening of the Richmond Street subway.

As the construction continued for the Richmond Street subway, the *London Advertiser* continued to update citizens of London on that phase of the construction. On Dec. 4, 1931 the paper provided a brief timeline of the construction process, starting with the purchase of the Dominion House at the corner of Clarence and York Streets on or about Nov. 25, 1930. The purchase allowed the C.N.R. to have a complete block for subway and station construction. The Dominion House sat on the same spot for so many years, it had "*a sort of squatters right."*[19] According to the paper many Londoners and travelling salesman from across Ontario would miss the Dominion House. At the work site a large number of *"rubber neckers later to be named excavation-watchers were in large numbers and from then on never left the scene of operations."* Steam shovel fans were also used at the scene. Before excavation could begin a number of homes on the north side of Bathurst Street had to be demolished.

Wellington Street looking north, Dec. 1931. Courtesy of The Canadian Museum of Science and Technology (STR29584a).

Wellington Street looking west to Richmond Street, 1936. Courtesy of Elgin County Archives (516-2030g).

The laying of temporary sidewalks at Wellington Street occurred on Feb. 26, 1931. Work continued through spring and summer and only halted when it rained. The last batch of concrete was poured on Nov. 4, 1931; the heavy mixing machine left soon afterwards.

Details from the *London Advertiser* provides a new perspective on the story. The work took only eleven months to complete and thanks to the creation of the subways accidents between cars and trains at Richmond and Wellington Streets became a thing of the past. The paper, also, noted that businesses on Richmond and Wellington streets suffered during construction. Lastly, the detailed articles in the *London Advertiser* provide the location of the official platform, at the south end of Richmond Street subway.

In an article dated Dec. 4, 1931 the *London Advertiser* sets the scene, providing the planned parade route, names of dignitaries in attendance, and the time the ceremonies were to commence.

> *"Colored street lights on both sides of Richmond Street from Dundas to the subway will turn the street like a Christmas tree to- night. The lights will be left to flash their colors along the business section until after the New Year. The lights have been put up by the merchants of the street."*[20]

The parade started at City Hall at 7:45 p.m., and marched to York and Richmond Streets with all participants falling in behind the band. Speeches were start at 8:30 p.m. with Mr. Cyril Thomas as chairman of the event. If weather co-operated, the ceremonies would take place in the open-air on the road at the site of the new subway.

Not to be outdone *London Free Press* commented on the festivities.

> *"Gayley Colored lights, festooned from pole to pole on Richmond from Dundas Street will add a carnival appearance to the subway opening ceremonies."*[21]

The businesses along Richmond Street were happy to see opening ceremonies as the Richmond Street subway gave access to and from south London. A platform was erected at the site of the old Tecumseh Hotel at the north end of the subway. Crowds were expected to be large:

> *"The streets were blockaded for hours as pedestrians and motorists alike jockeyed for an opportunity to be among the first to pass under the newly elevated tracks."*[22]

On Dec. 4, 1931 the *London Free Press* informed Londoners of some of the tests carried out on the subway. For instance, the heaviest steam locomotive was brought to London. Delicate instruments were used in the testing. To construct the walls, roadway, etc. the structures required more than 6,000 cubic yards of concrete, and over 500 carloads of gravel, and hundreds of tons of steel reinforcing were used. The *Free Press* also gave a detailed picture of the design. The roadways (lanes) were divided by a series of columns. Lighting was adequate and motorists did not need to use their headlights day or night. When the subways opened in December 1931; they had one lane in each direction, *"The roadways are wide enough for three or more cars abreast in each line of traffic"*[23] the approaches were not "overly inclined" (meaning not too steep). It was considered to be up-to-date, modern and most importantly, safer.

Wellington Street looking south, 1936. By this date the sidewalks and curbs were all in place.
Courtesy of Elgin County Archives (516-2030a).

Wellington Street subway looking north, 1936. Courtesy of Elgin County Archives (516-2030e).

The cost in 1931 was not considered extravagant; it was $250,000 for both subways. In fact, the cost for both was lower than expected. But it was money well spent. A modern and up-to-date design gave the impression to visitors that London was an innovative and important Canadian city. Many motorists used the Wellington Street subway to get to the south part of the city.

The *London Free Press* stated that: *"Londoners are now a little ahead of many larger cities in the province in the matter of overhead rail tracks."*[24] Safety and a more convenient route to the business district were mentioned.

The Railway Commissioners wanted London to pay its share of the grade separation project. However the City wanted to wait to pay after the $700,000 station was completed.

The C.N.R. was supposed to start construction of the station in 1931. There was no appropriation available; *"inquiries by the City revealed that next year's policy had been decided, and the assurance was given that anything under contract would be carried out."*[25]

The City wanted assurance that the station would be started and completed on schedule. The city considered the subways and station as one unit "the agreement for station facilities was a big factor on the electors' endorsing the project by a vote of 3 to 1."[26]

The station was eventually built, but not before much back and forth between the C.N.R. and The City of London. But that is another story unto itself!

Wellington Street subway looking north, 1936. Courtesy of Elgin County Archives (516-2030e).

Fun fact!

The heavy-duty pile driver equipment used clear the site for London's subways was so powerful that it inspired one of the most controversial wrestling moves in the sport's history. In the 1940s Wild Bill Longson invented the piledriver, a finishing move, popularizing it as he became a three-time National Wrestling Association World Heavyweight Champion.

The piledriver was performed by the wrestler grabbing his opponent, turning him upside-down, and dropping into a sitting or kneeling position then driving the opponent head-first into the wrestling mat. The move is now restricted with only two WWE wrestlers allowed to perform it, as incorrect use of the move was responsible for injuring and ending the career of Stone Cold Steve Austin.

Who knew the pile driver machine would have such an impact!

Wild Bill Longson.
Professional Wrestling Hall of Fame and Museum.

Endnotes

[1] *London Advertiser,* Apr.11, 1914, page 1.

[2] *London Advertiser,* Apr. 8, 1914.

[3] *London Advertiser,* Apr. 8, 1914.

[4] *London Advertiser,* Apr. 8, 1914.

[5] *London Free Press,* Apr. 10, 1914, page 2.

[6] *London Free Press,* Aug. 10, 1927.

[7] *London Free Press,* Aug. 2, 1929, page 8.

[8] *London Free Press,* Jan. 16, 1931, page 1.

[9] *London Free Press,* Jan. 16, 1931, page l.

[10] *London Free Press,* Jan. 16, 1931, page l.

[11] *London Free Press,* Jan. 16, 1931, page 1.

[12] *London Free Press,* Jan. 26, 1931, page 1.

[13] *London Free Press,* Jan. 26, 1931, page 1.

[14] *London Advertiser,* Jan. 28, 1931.

[15] *London Advertiser,* Jan. 27, 1931.

[16] *London Advertiser,* Jan. 28, 1931, page 1.

[17] *London Advertiser,* Jan. 28, 1931.

[18] *London Advertiser,* Jan. 29, 1931.

[19] *London Advertiser,* Nov. 2, 1931.

[20] *London Advertiser,* Dec. 4, 1931.

[21] *London Free Press,* Dec. 4, 1931, page 14.

[22] *London Free Press,* Dec. 4, 1931, page 14.

[23] *London Free Press,* Dec. 4, 1931, page 14.

[24] *London Free Press,* Dec. 4, 1931, page 14.

[25] *London Free Press,* Dec. 4, 1931, page 14.

[26] *London Free Press,* Dec. 4, 1931, page 14.

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