McKee Purchase Treaty
by
Fred Landon
McKee Indian Treaty Was British Purchase

Terms and Details by Which the Land Whereon We Live Was Ceded by Indian Tribes.—Memorial to be Built on Blenheim’s New

Feb. 1. Park, Chatham St. S. 1934

For our own benefit as well as for all of those in this district, The News-Tribune has been able to get a special article on the very important but almost obscure McKee Indian Treaty of 1790. Prior to that date the land on which we live in all of Essex and Kent and in parts of Middlesex and Elgin counties belonged to Indian tribes, from whom, as will be seen later, it was acquired by honourable purchase. As was announced last October, the Historical Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, of which Mr. Fred. Landon, of London, the writer of this article, is a member, decided to build a monument in the area concerned memorializing this important event in the history of Canada, and have selected the new memorial park in this town as the best site for the purpose. Headway is being made by the board to bring this about, and it will likely be completed during the season of 1934.

(Written specially for The News-Tribune by Prof. Fred. Landon, of the Department of History, University of Western Ontario, London.)

On the 19th day of May, 1790, there was negotiated at the fort of Detroit the treaty between the British government and four Indian tribes by which the southwestern part of the province of Ontario, lands now composing the counties of Essex, Kent and portions of Elgin and Middlesex, became open for the settlement of Loyalists and others. It is this treaty, signed 134 years ago, which is to be commemorated by the erection of a monument in the town of Blenheim, the site having been chosen by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada as being the centre of the tract that was purchased.

In the Archives at Ottawa one may see the historic document which was signed by the representatives of the crown and by the chiefs of the Ottawa, Chippewa, Pottowatomy and Huron tribes who were concerned, and one may see there also the letters that passed back and forth between the Detroit River frontier and the authorities at Quebec with respect to the negotiations and final purchase.

It was really a purchase that was made, though one may smile today at the details as they are solemnly set down in the treaty paper. The consideration is very definitely stated. It was to be “Twelve hundred pounds currency of the Province of Quebec at five shillings per Spanish dollar for valuable wares and merchandies.” In other words, no money was passed in the transaction but wares to the value above stated. Before stating of what these wares consisted, let us quote the boundaries that are given for the tract purchased. The treaty reads:

“A certain tract of land beginning at the mouth of Catfish Creek, commonly called Riviere au Chaudiere, on the north side of Lake Erie, being the western extremity of a tract purchased from the Massesagey Indians in the year 1784, and from thence running westward along the border of Lake Erie and up the Streight to the mouth of a river known by the name of Channail Ecarte and up the main branch of the said Channail Ecarte to the first fork on the south side, then a due east line until it intersects the Riviere a la Tranche (Thames), and up the said Riviere a la Tranche to the north west corner of the said cession granted to His Majesty in the year 1784, then following the western boundary of said tract, being a due south direction until it strikes the mouth of said Catfish Creek or otherwise Riviere au Chaudiere, being the first offset.”

The “Streight” is, of course, the Detroit River, and the Riviere a la Tranche is the Thames. The Channail Ecarte needs no explanation, and Riviere au Chaudiere is Kettle Creek.

Now for the purchase price. Twelve hundred pounds’ worth of “valuable wares and merchandise” is what is promised, and this is what was delivered to the tribes. The treaty mentions every item. First in order is blankets, 840 pairs altogether, of various grades. Next comes cloths of various kinds, including 140 yards of scarlet cloth valued at eight shillings a yard, and ribbons and thread and a dozen black silk handkerchiefs, the latter valued
at one pound and ten shillings. Blankets, cloths, etc., make up the first section of the payment price, being valued at 722 pounds and some odd shillings.

The second section of the list begins with plain hats, twenty dozen of them at fifteen shillings a dozen. Then begins a long list of hardware, guns, ammunition, etc. There were to be sixty guns and twenty rifles. An item of 2,000 flints reminds us that it was still the day of the flint-lock. Thirty dozen looking-glasses may have been a concession to the ladies of the various tribes, as also twelve dozen scissors, twelve dozen horn combs and twelve dozen ivory combs. Fish hooks to the number of 1,000 are included and also brass kettles to the weight of 600 lbs. This second section being added up amounts to 290 pounds and a few shillings.

The third list is a very brief one and it is not clear why the two items of fire steels and pipes should be separated from other items. Their value is but one pound and six-pence.

The fourth list is a curious one. It begins with 39 gallons of rum at three shillings and nine pence a gallon. Then comes a bullock valued at thirteen pounds. Next, 400 pounds of tobacco, 24 faced hats, 11 gross of pipes and two gross of Cutteaw knives. Thus the list is completed, the value in all 1,200 pounds currency of the Province of Quebec.

Hundreds of thousands of people live on this area that was bought in 1790, including one city which alone has more than 75,000 people.

We have had preserved for us a record of what was said on the occasion of the great council held on May 19th, 1790. The interpreters for the occasion were Isadore Chene and Simon Girty, the latter a name well remembered in the annals of the Detroit River frontier. Gough and Chippewas, at the mouth of the Detroit River, and according to Isadore Chene this is how he began his speech:

"Father, we are now within the Paternal House where everyone is free to speak his mind; therefore, Father, I request you to hear me; I request the same of our Fathers the Officers, our Brethren the Merchants and all of you, my Brothers, of my own colour, and those Indians of the other tribes. You have told us that you have received letters from our Father the General, and our Father Sir John Johnson, acquainting you that our Father the Great King had written to them, to know if we would cede him a piece of land extending from the other side of the river (the Detroit River) to the line of that ceded by the Mississagas.

"Father, is there a man amongst us who will refuse this request?

"What man can refuse what is asked by a Father so good and so generous that he has never yet refused us anything? What nation? None, Father. We have agreed to grant all you ask according to the limits settled between us and you, and which we are all acquainted with. We grant it you all, Father, in presence of Our Fathers the Officers and our Brothers the Merchants."

This is but a part of the speech, which was next addressed to the representatives of the Indian tribes and particularly to the Hurons, who were given two reservations on the western frontier.

Major Patrick Murray, of the 60th regiment, then stationed at Detroit, replied to the chief, and in the course of his remarks said:

"I return thanks to the Great Spirit through whose favour we have the happiness of meeting as one family, and shall inform His Excellency Lord Dorchester of the unanimous and dutiful manner in which you have complied with His Lordship's desire, by ceding to the King for the purpose of settling such of His Majesty's subjects as may come to live upon it. Your Fathers, the Governor and Superintendent General, have directed an ample consideration to be given you for the land, and you have agreed with Captain McKee upon the sum as fully sufficient. It remains now only with me to pay you the consideration agreed upon, which shall be done tomorrow, as soon as your several nations are assembled for the purpose."

Some reader may be puzzled to know how it was that a British garrison could be found at Detroit as late as 1790, since by the Treaty of 1783, at the close of the Revolutionary War, all
Condensed History
of Blenheim District

Dr. C. B. Langford Compiles Record of
First Settlements and Many Events
in the Early Life of Harwich
and Blenheim 1934

Feb. 7

At last week's meeting of the Blenheim Rotary Club Dr. C. B. Langford read a most interesting paper on the early history of Blenheim and district. Much comment has been made from time to time of the fact that so few details of the origins of our forefathers have ever been made public, and The News-Tribune feels that we are all indebted to Dr. Langford for the interesting facts he has so diligently compiled into readable form, as follows:—

First White People in 1794

Published histories and traditions agree in fixing the date of the first concerted influx of settlers in the Township of Harwich at about the year 1794, by the end of which time a great many locations were chosen and settled upon along the Thames River, which was originally called "La Tranche." The settlers were chiefly U. E. Loyalists and discharged British soldiers, with which class the Government colonized very extensive areas of this province; but of the two grades of settlers mentioned the ex-soldiers were not to be preferred for pioneer life, for so notorious was their non-fulfillment of the high expectations formed of them in their new relations that Smith's "Canada" says in reference to their new location in the Western district: "They were about the very worst class of men to form a first settlement within a new country."

Early Settlers Soldiers and U. E. Loyalists

These persons were supplied with a year's provisions, farming implements and two hundred acres of land to each private soldier, three hundred acres to a corporal and four hundred to a sergeant, one thousand to a subordinate or lieutenant and two thousand to a captain. These lands seldom remained long in the hands of those who first obtained them, generally being parted with for a mere trifle; and we have heard of a farm of one hundred acres, which, even at a much later date, was purchased for a side of bacon. It is but fair to observe in this connection that of the pioneers whose posterity now occupy this region but very few deserve classification among those described by Smith.

John Crawford First Lake Shore Pioneer

The pioneer of Lake Erie shore within this county was John Crawford, who came from Mississippi in 1801, and after a few years' residence in Talbotville, Elgin County, located just east of the Howard-Harwich townline on what is now Lot 102; Howard, or very near the house now occupied by Thos. Davis. There were very few other permanent settlers along the lake shore until the termination of the Anglo-American war of 1812-15, when Colonel Talbot began the colonization of Talbot Street, which embryo highway was flanked by settlers in 1818 from the eastern to the western limits of the country.

Col. Talbot a Great Figure

The intimate connection of Col. Talbot with the early history of that portion of the county contiguous to the lake shore demands more than a passing notice, as does also the colonel himself. Col. Talbot was of Irish birth. He was by education and sympathy an Englishman of very pronounced type. It annoyed him greatly to be reminded of his nativity, and with a shrug of his shoulders he was wont to reply, "Humph! Christ was born in a stable, but He wasn't an ass." The colonel was acting in the capacity of land agent for the British Government, which allowed to each settler a free grant of two hundred acres on condition of their performance of certain settlers' duties and payment for the deeds of conveyance, which amounted to about thirty dollars. It is said by many, however, that Col. Talbot took advantage of the ignorance of Government regulations on the part of many of the settlers and while deeding them fifty of the two hundred acres to which they were entitled, would deed the balance to himself. This is averred by so many of the pioneers of that period as to fully support the inference that at least that the colonel had his peculiarities in regard to business transactions." He was, nevertheless, very popular, was not arrogant or over-bearing, was good to the poor and tempered his few faults with many virtues.
In 1795 the Township of Harwich was partially surveyed by Abraham Iredell, whose instructions included an order to lay out “a road of communication between the Chatham settlement and Rond Eau or Little Lake” and to “lay out two-hundred-acre lots on either side thereof for settlement by U. E. Loyalists.” This was done accordingly as some parties claim, as late as 1797 but the road was not established to the lake until 1844, although that portion between Chatham and where Blenheim now stands had been long previously cut out and named the Mill Road or Communication Road. Although reserved for settlement by U. E. Loyalists, the land along the highway mentioned was not so taken, except a few lots in the vicinity of Blenheim, which, although drawn from Governments by representatives of that class, was not settled by them but subsequently by other parties.

**Blenheim First a Habitation in 1833 and Names of Earliest Settlers**

The Village of Blenheim was first settled in 1833 or 1834, when Richard Chute took up his residence south of the Ridge Road, or Talbot Street, and west of the Communication Road, building a habitation of logs opposite the site of the Cadillac Hotel, or where John Rutherford now has a gasoline station. And as early as 1834 one Brundage lived in a log shanty on the site now occupied by Knight Bros.’ garage. Neither of these parties was the original owner of the land so occupied by them, it having passed into the ownership of the Scotch Laird of Inches, after being drawn by other parties from Government, together with other land in the county, to the extent of 27,000 acres.

This section had for many years been commonly referred to as the “Ten Mile Bush” from the fact that the entire width of the township, ten miles, along Upper Talbot Street, or the Lower Ridge Road, as it is variously called, was up to that date entirely unsettled; and so moderate was its advance in this particular that the name quoted stuck to it up to comparatively late date. A short distance west of the town on the Ridge Road, now No. 3 Highway, William McGregor settled, in 1841, the first in that direction, while on the east side of the Communication Road. John Jackson took up the lots on either side of Talbot Street, the pioneer of the east end of the town. Mr. Jackson had previously settled in Romney, where he held residence for some time after locating the lots referred to, but afterwards established his residence here and became one of the prominent figures in Blenheim’s history.

At the date of this settlement the territory adjoining Lot 9 on the south was a Clergy Reserve, upon which no settlement was made for many years after.

In or about 1840 Col. James Little, of Talbot Street, Raleigh, purchased Chute’s location (east half Lot 10, con. 1 WCR) and a portion of Lot 11, north of Talbot Street, and plotted thereon the town of Blenheim.

In 1846 John McMichael took up Lot 9, con. 2 WCR, at which date there were but three residents upon Col. Little’s village plot. These were Harvey Halstead, Thomas Lynch and George Hughson. Mr. Halstead was a farmer and contractor, having assisted in the latter capacity in constructing the continuation of the Communication Road from Talbot Street to Rond Eau or Shrewsbury in 1844. Mr. Lynch was a tailor, plying the needle and thread in a primitive building located where E. G. Thompson’s store and the Bank of Montreal now stand. Mr. Hughson sold whiskey in a diminutive crib where Knight Bros. now have their automobile show-room. The site occupied by the more westerly part of the Knight building was then devoted to Hughson’s residence, an unpretentious structure of logs. Jackson’s property, east of the Communication Road, had not yet been plotted, but upon that part of it lying north of main or Talbot Street there were two families living, Thos. Hicks and Thos. Maxwell, while about a mile farther east on lot 13, con. 6 LE, John Cleveland was located, although prior to his settlement there the farm had been occupied by George Hughson, who came here in 1840.

**First Store in 1845**

The increase of settlement in this part of the township soon created a demand for mercantile conveniences within easier distance than Chatham, which was then the nearest business centre; and one result of this was the establishment of a store in Blenheim by two brothers named Pass, in 1845. This was the pioneer trading concern of the town. Their store was located on the site now occupied by the Dominion Store, but they abandoned the business and premises some time later and were succeeded, after a considerable interval, by the brothers Orrin and Redman Gee, who occupied the premises of the Pass brothers. The Gees built the first brick house in town, being themselves manufacturers of bricks, which industry led all others in Blenheim at date of establishment. The village did not expand very rapidly for some years after the inception of commercial institutions.
In 1849 a post-office was opened here, with Orrin Gee as post-master. Owing to the name of Blenheim having been already bestowed upon a post office in Oxford County, that of Rond Eau was accorded to the new office, partly because of its proximity to that body of water. Blenheim showed a decided improvement during the decade succeeding the opening of its post-office and the establishment of its first industries. Being in the midst of a splendidly timbered region, mills for the working of this natural product into various forms of usefulness sprang up, and around the nucleus formed by their operation a village of considerable and advancing importance soon clustered. Institutions of secular and spiritual education were established, the first school-house in the southern half of the township being built in the east end of the village; and soon after the Methodists erected the pioneer church of the locality. With each stride towards a higher material consequence the village appeared to greater strength for greater efforts, which, judiciously applied, resulted in placing Blenheim among the busiest and most progressive rural villages in the west.

By the year 1864 Blenheim contained two steam saw-mills, one grist mill, two general stores, three grocers, four blacksmith shops, one saddle and harness shop, three hotels, two turning factories, two physicians, a temperance organization. Orange and Odd Fellows lodges, and a good school with an average attendance of 70 pupils and Wm. McGregor as principal and Miss Mary Walker assistant. The Fourth Division Court was held here, mails were received from and forwarded to Chatham via stage at 11 a.m., from St. Thomas at 4 p.m., from Amherstburg tri-weekly. Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, with J. K. Morris as post-master.

The Episcopal Church was built in 1861 at a cost of $700. The size was 30 x 40 feet and the edifice accommodated 200 persons. Rev. Lampman, of Morpeth, was the minister. The Wesleyan Methodist Church was built in 1856, the size being 30 x 50 feet, and with seating capacity of 300. Rev. Brawby was the minister.

Early Organizations


Blenheim Voluntary Infantry Co.—John McMichael, Captain; J. K. Morris, Lieut.; P. Crawford, Ensign.

Professions and Businesses

Anderson & Cox (Jas. A. and J.)—Wagon makers and general blacksmiths.

Anger House—Amos Anger, prop.

Baird, Wm.—Manufacturer of boots and shoes.

Bell, A.—Prop. Blenheim steam saw-mill.

Benedict, Chas.—Sawyer.

Best, Jerome.

Bisnett, Alfred.

Bumrel, E. F.—Foreman L. D. Walker's mill.

Burk, Erastus—Dealer in dry goods.

groceries, etc.

Calder, Hugh—Customs house officer.

Craney, Thos.—Manufacturer boots and shoes.

Dalton, Solon—Manufacturer chairs, spring beds, rakes and handles.

English, Jas.—Shoemaker.

English, Andrew.

English, Wm.

English, Thos.

Fletcher, Jas.—Shoemaker.

Harvey, G.—Merchant.

Hughson, Robert—Prop. Blenheim steam grist mill.

Irwin, Wm.

Jackson, M. L.—Bailiff.

Jackson, Peter.

Jackson, Thos. R.

Laird, Stephen—Blacksmith.

Laird, John—Fireman.


McCully, Sam. E., M.D.—Graduate of Victoria College.

McGeogre, Wm.

McGregor, Finley—Farmer.

McGregor, Robt.

McGregor, James.


McGregor, Wm.—Farmer.

McMichael, John, J.P.—Reeve Harwich.

Malcolm, Sherman—Provincial land surveyor.

Mallory, Wm.—Stage prop. and grocer.

Morris, J. K.—Postmaster. dealer in dry goods, groceries, hardware, etc.

Mills, John.

A Few Early Facts About Blenheim.

Its favourable position, at a safe distance from Chatham or other neighbouring points, secured to Blenheim a large volume of agricultural trade, especially from the excellent district to the south-east, which was rapidly settled when once the tide of progress reached it.

First Village Council in 1875

Mercantile, industrial and social institutions multiplied, and Blenheim assumed the dignity of municipal “Capital” of Harwich, with the town hall there located. It remained part and parcel of that township until separately incorporated as a village, its charter taking effect with the beginning of 1875. The Council then elected consisted of Messrs. A. L. Bisnett, Reeve; T. R. Jackson, John McMichael, George L. Mallory and Lewis Kinnie, Councillors; the official slate being thus composed: W. R. Fellows, Clerk; John Campbell, Treasurer; Henry Robinson, Assessor; John G. Mountford, Collector; Amos Anger, Inspector of Licenses; J. P. Morgan and J. K. Morris, Auditors.

Churches as Numerous in 1880 as Now

Blenheim in 1880 had a population bordering 1,200; an area of about 483 acres, assessed at $169,124, which, added to other items, made a total assessed valuation of $184,949, less than one-third the actual value of the property divided as it was among 412 ratepayers. The village was well provided with churches of a creditable order of architecture, the creeds represented being the Baptist, which church, a really elaborate one, was the finest in the village; Methodist, Presbyterian, Universalist, Latter Day Saints, Episcopal and Roman Catholic, the place thus showing the most thorough diversity of religious sentiment found in any village of its size in Canada. Another of its intellectual attractions was a well-conducted and very readable weekly journal, which was published under the name of the Rond Eau News, and the proprietorship of Thos. O. Steele. This paper was established October, 1873, by Samson & Ash, who conducted it a year, when Dr. Samson assumed full control, subsequently disposing of the paper to H. Doherty & Co. The News enjoyed a large circulation, wide influence and extensive popularity for its independence in politics, advocacy of high morals, and the ability displayed in its local and editorial departments.

The manufacturing interests of Blenheim were fairly prosperous, and included two considerable wood-bending establishments; sash, door and blind factories; several extensive saw and grist mills; foundry and implement factory, beside minor establishments of divers kinds. Being without railway communication nearer than Charing Cross, five miles distant on the Canada Southern, now the Michigan Central Railway, the trade and industries of the village naturally suffered somewhat as compared with more favoured towns; but the near future promised very valuable railway advantages to Blenheim which, when obtained, it was expected, would necessarily exert a most beneficial influence upon her material condition and prospects. The line which was promised was the Erie and Huron, now the Pere Marquette.

Representatives in County Council

1864 and 1865 John McMichael, of the township of Harwich. 1866, John McMichael was Warden. Up to this date the Reeves and Deputies had been elected by the councils of the municipalities from among their own numbers, but in 1867 for the first time they were elected by direct vote of the people. 1868, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74—Dr. D. J. VanVelsor. 1872—Dr. VanVelsor was Warden. 1875—A. L. Bisnett when Blenheim was newly incorporated. 1877, 77, 78 and 79—Thos. R. Jackson. 1879—Thos. R. Jackson was Warden.


Town of Blenheim Incorporated in 1885

Arrivals of Early Residents

Some of the older residents of Blenheim who have not been mentioned in the development of the town came to Blenheim in the years as follows:

1840—Jerome Best.
1850—John Adair, Wm. McGregor.
1854—A. L. Bisnett.
1856—Thos. Edison, Mrs. Dan Hall.
1857—Asa Putnam.
1858—Rev. A. W. Waddell, minister in Blenheim for 36 years.
1859—Abe Durfy (is now 82, hale and hearty.) Sam. Tedford, Jos. Steele, C. Rowe.
1857—Jas. Hall.
1858—Jas. Cox.
1859—Jas. Telfer, Rufus Earl, Isaak Markby, R. J. Powell, John G. Mountford. Peter Burse was elected treasurer of the I.O.O.F. Lodge in 1886 and has been an Oddfellow for 60 years.
1860—E. A. Byram, Mott Anger.
1861—George Henry, F. M. Deacon.
1862—Jas. Telfer, Rufus Earl, Issaac Markby, R. J. Powell, John G. Mountford. Peter Burse was elected treasurer of the I.O.O.F. Lodge in 1886 and has been an Oddfellow for 60 years.
1863—Thos. Edison, Mrs. Dan Hall.
1864—Jas. Ash.
1866—Sam. Crosby, John Nichols, Robert Nichols, Robert Crosby, Mark Hornby.
1868—George Henry, F. M. Deacon.
1869—Jas. Telfer, Rufus Earl, Isaak Markby, R. J. Powell, John G. Mountford. Peter Burse was elected treasurer of the I.O.O.F. Lodge in 1886 and has been an Oddfellow for 60 years.
1872—Geo. Halleck (whose daughter Caroline has looked after the altar in the R. C. Church for 50 years).
1874—Henry Faust.
1875—J. S. Crookshank, Moses Clemens.
1876—Wm. Snow.
1877—J. S. Crookshank, Moses Clemens.
1878—Wm. Thompson.
1879—J. S. Crookshank, Moses Clemens.

The First School, 1849.

The first school was built in 1844 on a lot near where Al. James's house now stands and the first teacher was a Mr. Dunn who for a few dollars a month and boarding around the section kept school.

The First Church Built in 1855.

The first church, Wesleyan Methodist, in 1855, on the land donated by John Jackson on the present site of Chatham St., United Church. The Presbyterian in 1856. The Baptist organized here in 1847 held meetings around the different members' homes and built their first church in 1876.

The First Post Office, 1849.

The first Post Office was opened in 1849 with Orrin Gee as Post Master. In 1853 John Cavanagh was Post Master. He died in 1856 when J. K. Morris was appointed. He continued until 1916 when W. J. Baird was appointed. The Post Office was known as Rond Eau until 1879 when the name was changed to Blenheim.

The First Newspaper

The first newspaper was started in 1874 by Dr. Samson and Jos. Ash, the succeeding owners being Messrs. Doherty, Steele, Patterson, White, and Andrew Denholm, who bought in 1888.

Early Banking Institutions

T. R. Jackson started a private Bank in 1870. Later he had as partner a Mr. Fuller, of Leamington. They later sold to R. J. Powell. The first chartered Bank "The Commerce" opened Aug. 2, 1886.

The Erie & Huron Railway came in 1883, running to the foot of the 2nd Con., "Squaw Camp." Later on, about 1895, it was extended to Erieville. The Lake Erie and Detroit River Rly. came in 1890 or 1891.

Three Disastrous Fires

Blenheim has had three disastrous fires. In 1875 fire destroyed all the stores on Talbot St. from Springsteen's corner to Town Hall corner. In 1876 fire destroyed all the stores from Mirwin's Store to the Communication Rd. In 1878, fire destroyed all stores from Rose Barber Shop to Mr. Spackman's old store. One of the stores being a
three-storey brick on the site of the present Dominion Stores.

As would be expected the early industries were those devoted almost entirely to timber and their products. These mills gave employment to a large number of men. Every one was working and happy.

Wood-working Industries Important

A. L. Bisnett, who came here in 1849, had a large saw-mill and bending factory, giving employment at times to 125 men. He also carried on a General Store business. In 1893 he moved to his farm of 700 acres in South Harwich.

J. K. Morris came here in 1856 and with his partner, Joseph Ash, did an extensive business in wood products. Mr. Morris was an outstanding man in all civic affairs. He was a staunch supporter of the Anglican Church and a prominent Mason. Following these men came E. A. and Abe Byran, John Mulholland, Jas. Telfer, J. B. Coats and T. L. Pardo.

Outstanding in Town's Development

Undoubtedly the outstanding men in the development of Blenheim were John McMichael, J. K. Morris, A. L. Bisnett, T. R. Jackson, Geo. Thompson, Dr. VanVelsor, Dr. Jas. Samson, T. S. Bell and Jas. Rutherford. Many more must have helped in many ways even if they did not take such a prominent part in the civic government of this town.

Pioneer Medical Men

The first medical man was Dr. Chas. Tozer, who came here in 1852 and died ten years later. He was the father of the late Mrs. Wm. Thompson, of Cedar Springs, who died last year beloved by all who knew her. Later came Dr. S. McCully, who was a partner of Dr. Tozer. Then came Dr. D. J. VanVelsor, who was a vital force in community and civic life. A few years later came Dr. James Samson. These two men had a very large and extensive practice as far west as Wheatley and throughout the Townships of Raleigh and up to Romney. Dr. Samson was very prominent in political life and was without a doubt one of the most eloquent speakers this country has ever known.

Miscellaneous Data

The first public library, called the Mechanics' Institute, was started in 1887.

The first electric light was in 1890 which was furnished from a plant in Jas. Telfer's mill (now Henderson's).

Unique Characters in the 70's

In the late 70's, Blenheim had a number of unique and interesting characters in the persons of Sam. Crosby, Robt. Crosby, Paddy Glenn, Mike Dunn and Felix Gurney, who were in a class by themselves with their Irish wit and humor. Then there was Biddy Dunlop, the fortune teller and tailorress. No one ever before or since has dressed as she did. Then came Sherman Malcolm, the surveyor, who always wore a silk hat and frock coat; wore his hair long but shaved high on the sides of his head, and who, at the word "Rats" would chase the boys a block or two.

Jimmie Bowes never was known to work.

I should also mention Aitken, the tailor, decked out in a linen duster and white plug hat, driving a span of horses every Sunday.

A Mr. LeRoy was the first lawyer, then Mr. McDonald, then R. L. Gosnell in 1889, then Russell Thompson who died in 1906.

Jos. Meredith made the first coffins, charging $5 or $6 each. He was followed by Jos. Coghlan. Then came T. C. Ford and Robt. Kilpatrick.

Blenheim for many years had five hotels, 'The Sheldon House, Vester House, Rob Roy Hotel (Mrs. McGregor), Elliott House and the Anger Hotel, and whiskey was 25 cents a gallon.

A man named Farley was the first bus driver here to Chatham and John M. Burk, the second. He had a sparrow spotted horses.

Geo. Hall, father of David Hall, had the first foundry, where Mulholland's mill was later on.

A man named Hicks ran the first drug store, then Mr. Hall followed by J. S. Crookshank.

Let. Edmunds was known throughout Canada as one of the greatest horsemen this country ever produced, owning at different times some of its fastest race horses, and would trade horses with anybody at any time, and never squealed when he got trimmed.

Jim Winters was the first veterinarian.

The courageous faith and optimism of the business men in rebuilding the town after the disastrous fires in 1875, 1876, and 1877 is certainly to be commended and shows just what a fighting spirit they possessed.

The long pastorate of Rev. A. W. Waddell, who was beloved and honoured by all, must be mentioned.

John (Squire) McMichael was first magistrate, John Durly (Abe's father) was first constable. The lock-up and fire-hall were for many years in the building now occupied by Harry Bowne. The first fire-fighting apparatus consisted of a big force pump on a truck, operated by hand from a long bar on each side of pump and required about
The Lacrosse Club, called "The Kents" was the great athletic organization between 1880 and 90. They were champions of this district for three years and the best club between St. Thomas and Windsor. The players included John Stevens, Dr. Gibb, Billy Henry, Jack Shillington, Harry James, Frank Arkell, Joe Livingston, Les Arnold, Ed. and Kirby Thompson, Bob Stokes, Billy Hewitt, Herb. Wilson and Billy O'Brien. Hewitt and Wilson came in from Bright and O'Brien from Paris. They had, for specially hard games, two friends from Newmarket, Bob Manning and Lou Campbell.

How Blenheim Was Named

At a party staged in Brundage's log house and attended by most of the settlers of the district, the name Blenheim came into being as the name of this town. Up to this time the group of settlers had no special name. During the evening's enjoyment and entertainment the late Mungo Samson gave a recitation entitled "The Battle of Blenheim". The vigor and excellence of its delivery, coupled with the thoughts and sentiments contained in the composition so impressed those present that they decided then and there that this growing community should be named Blenheim, and so it was.

Pioneers Named in Streets

The names of the early pioneers have been perpetuated by the names of streets in Blenheim. McGregor, Maxwell, Anger, Little, Jackson. The oldest building in the business section of the town is the one occupied now as Blenheim Hotel. It was built in the 60's by John Jackson, and originally had a third story which was taken off about 1870. It was known as "Jackson's folly" and must have some wonderful timber in its construction.

Some of Early Harwich Settlers

The following are some of the pioneers of the Township of Harwich, south of the Ridge Road, and east and west of Blenheim on the Ridge Road up to about the year 1880. I have not been able to ascertain when some of these came to this section, and if I have missed any names of pioneers I apologize and assure you it was not intentional.

In the year 1810 or 1812 came Mrs. Hinman. She was the grandmother of Ed. Smith, of Cedar Springs, and owned all the land between 4th Con. and the Gore Line, south side of the Ridge Road.

In 1818, Jas. Smith.
In 1830, Richard Hughson.
In 1833, James Bell and Caleb Lowes.
In 1834, Coghlan Mead. Said to be the first white boy born in South Harwich.

In 1835, Mungo Samson, Jos. Clarke.
In 1837, Geo. Ed. Smith, Jas. Guilds, born, Wm. Clarke, John McGregor (father of W. R. McGregor), Henry Pickering (where Stewart Campbell lives.)
In 1841, Jas. Laurie.
In 1842, O. P. Handy, Allan Grant, Wm. Thompson, Alex. Laird, Stil. Wilson.
In 1844, Leonard Bentley, Gawn Craig (father of Robt., John, Cyrus and Hugh).
In 1845, Burns Steele, Henry D. Sterling.
In 1847, Wm. Muckle, David Eagle.
In 1848, Lyman Patterson, John Clarke, Jacob Carnes.
In 1849—John Gordon.
In 1850, Jas. McKay, Arch. Campbell, Hugh McPherson, John Shanks, Byron Bentley, Fife Hartford, Joseph Martin, Philander Crawford.
In 1851, Jonathan Burse, Ralph Story, John Cameron.
In 1852, Arch. Hunter, Purcell Lee.
In 1854, Wilbert Wiley (is still alive and in good health), Jas. Haggart, Neil Haggart, Alex. Haggart, J. H. Ransom, Oliver Ransom, Jim Richards, David Smith, John Day.
In 1855, Steve Arnold. David Caughell, Thos. Shippey, Mannell Maynard (2 room log house).
In 1856, Dougald Carmichael.
In 1857, Deacon Reynolds, Thomas Coatsworth, Ephriam Mallory.
In 1858, Neil Sinclair.
In 1859, Joseph Snobelen.
In 1860, David Bell, David Maynard, Jas. Burk, Chas. Gerow, John M. Burk, Samuel Todd, Samuel Hartford, Wm. Sterling.
In 1862, John Burchiel, Wm. Ransom, Samuel Hartford Jr.
In 1863, Chas. McGuigan, Geo. Giffin.
In 1864, Thos. Roe.
In 1865, Hiram Huff, Abe Armstrong, Cornelius Thompson, John Green.
In 1866, Wm. Cameron.
In 1867, Mark Soper.
In 1869, John W. Hambly.
In 1869, Robert Wilkie, Manning Sturk.
In 1870 J. Wetherald, Wm. Sterling, Pem. Warner.
In 1871, Malcolm McLachlan.
In 1872, E. B. Tole, Jos. Buchanan, Samuel Bentley, Dr. Jonathan McCully, Wm. H. Nevills.
In 1873, Legea.
In 1874, Peter Anger, Wm. Thompson, Chas. Holmes.
In 1876, John P. McDougall, Arch. Nichol, Adam Henry.
In 1877, Wm. Can.
In 1878, Geo. Ross, Andrew Dodds, Franklin Hebblethwaite.
In 1879, Jas. Clendenning.
In 1890, Andrew Serson.
Jas. Laird came from Scotland in 1841 with the following family: Joseph, John, James G., Alex., Janet, Elizabeth and Mary.
John Laird, son of James Laird, had the following family: J. K., born in 1853; Margaret, 1855, Peter, 1837, Isabel, 1867.
Joseph Laird, also a son of James Laird, had the following family: James G., born in 1842, Archie, 1843, John S., 1849.
A Few Facts About South Harwich
Johnson Soper was very prominent in his day, with his large holdings of land, his saw mill and dock situated about half way between Raglan and the foot of the Eau.
E. L. Stoddard had a saw mill at Raglan and did a big business. He meant much to the settlers and employed a large number of men. Both he and Soper shipped by boat from the Eau.
Jonathan Burse ran a hotel at Raglan.
Many people in Blenheim and South Harwich will recall the wonderful duck dinners put on by Katie (Fife) Hartford. A good time was had by all. If you don't believe me, ask Bill Hall or Truman Warner.
Cornelius Thompson, of Shrewsbury, an escaped slave, deserved mention. He built a church, or tabernacle, as he called it, opposite his home, where he conducted services. He also preached at Erieau in the summer months.
One of the large land owners near Blenheim was Enoch Stevens. He owned 800 acres on the Communication Road and gave 100 acres each to five sons.
The first church was built on the present site of the 4th Line Church. Wm. Cameron gave the land.
Joseph Clark, a devout Christian gentleman, headed the Clarks, who included such outstanding characters as William, John, and Charles, who with their descendants have meant so much to the people of the community.
James Burk was another of the pioneers who figured prominently in the development and growth of South Harwich. He had as sons Solomon, Silas, Zabina, Elijah, Benoni and John. These all married and have been blessed with large families who have uniformly proven a credit to the name they bear. There were several daughters born to James Burk, but may I mention one, Dorothy, who married Samuel Hartford. She was familiarly known as Aunt Dolly. For years she assisted at nearly every maternity case in the neighbourhood, either with or without a doctor, and hundreds of mothers surely call her blessed.
Philander Craford must be mentioned as a pioneer, particularly his energy displayed in the development of his pet, "Erieau." He was astute, clever and possessed of enough legal knowledge to make him a worthy adversary in any deal.
As a man of courage we must think of James Laird, who with his wife and 7 children came from Scotland to face a pioneer's life here in 1841. Surely this must place both him and his wife among those worthy of our admiration. His descendants have proven themselves worthy of a noble heritage.
Without detracting in any way from the heroism of any pioneer who helped to make this Garden of Canada what it is now, may I mention some of the families who contributed their bit in the development? The Snoebelins, McGuiags, Smiths, Harford, Hartfords, Maynard's, Sterling's, Tolls, Steele's, Wileys, Craig's, Reynolds, Wilson, Hamblys, Hunters, Wilkies, Gaughells, Thompsons, Buchanans, Gerows, McDouglalls, Grants, Haggarts, Shanks, McPhersons, Sturks, Peggs, McGregors, who have had five generations on the same farm.
John G. Mountford signed as a Roman Catholic, so as to get School Sec. 13½ Raglan as a Separate School. Later it became Protestant.

Courage of the Pioneers
The sparseness of the population and their pecuniary inability to provide the facilities for education, public worship, social enjoyment, etc., not to mention many of the more necessary elements of life in the shape of food, raiment and house furnishings, rendered the early existence of these hardy pioneers of South Harwich and Blenheim the opposite of luxurious. While in many instances, and at different periods, their material status subsided several degrees below ordinary comforts, yet the will power and courage which had guided them to the selection of this region as their future homes sustained them in uncomplaining patience during the reign of want and poverty, tiding them eventually in safety through those narrow straits, and securing to them a degree of comfort and independence highly compli-
mentary to their energy and application.

During the early settlement of South Harwich squatters were frequent. They were men and families who moved in on any vacant lot without having purchased the land. They stayed until put off by a real purchaser. Then they moved on to another place, sometimes keeping this up for years, or until they had made enough to buy a place.

In addition to C. Thompson, mentioned before as a resident of Shrewsbury, one should include Addison Smith and his 17 children, Murphy, P. B. Patterson, the Lewis's, George Griffith and the Anderson's.

The Bell Telephone opened office in Blenheim in 1885 with Crookshank Bros. as managers.

The Blenheim and South Kent Telephone Co. was organized in 1906, with head office at C. L. VonGunten's.

Mr. Shippy was the first dentist, followed by Dr. G. J. Gibb in 1883.

Thos. Fowles was the first barber and was "some character."

Jim Best was the champion stave cutter.

Henry Faust had the first harness shop.

Billy Robertson used to walk to The Bar, now Erleau, every Sunday and take the mail to Shirley's, the fishermen. He was straight as an arrow and a great walker.

B. F. Sutherland had the first tailor shop.

Mr. Ernest was the first jeweller, then Phil. Bowyer, then J. W. Gibson, then C. L. VonGunten.

F. M. Deacon had the first book store and telegraph office.

Edward Adair ran the first and only second hand store in 1870.

The town and township had a joint poor house near Dick Bowden's. It was burned later with great loss of life. "Not human."

T. Swanson and W. D. Samson had the first hardware store.

Paddy Glenn had a large number of medals from the Crimean War. He used to pawn them when on a spree, then redeem them when sober.

Acknowledgements

I am deeply indebted in the preparation of this rather rambling and, I feel certain, incomplete paper to the following in Blenheim: J. S. Crookshank, C. A. Wedge, Abram Durfy, Jas. Best, Peter Burse, Mrs. Chas. Sheldon.
