

## OXFORD'S GHOST TOWNS

During recent months, as *Sentinel-Review* photographer Ted Town went about his regular assignments, he's been gathering photos of the vanished settlements that are the ghost towns of Oxford County. Another is Beaconsfield: located in North Norwich Township on County Road 14, Beaconsfield was named in honor of

the British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli, Earl of Beaconsfield. A post office was established here in 1877. Today, it is nothing more than a crossroads with a few houses.

W.J. Wintemberg, reprinted from the Ontario Historical Society's *Papers and Records*, Volume XXII, 1925.

SENTINEL REVIEW  
May 14, 1988





Edward W. Burgess, who gave his name to the Oxford County village in 1848, was born there in 1821, when the settlement was known as "Snyder's Corners".

## Burgessville Retained Apple Growing Industry

DURING THE PERIOD when Johnny Appleseed was sowing the virgin fields of the American West with pips, something of that sort was going on in a little Western Ontario settlement called Snyder's Corners, now Burgessville, Oxford County.

Although the growing of fruit trees in the first half of the 19th century was insignificant compared to the work of sawing lumber and grinding flour, it is the apple industry which has maintained Burgessville. The first apples were hauled to Howick Township in 1850. That was the beginning of the industry which now produces 9,000 barrels a year in the locality. Of all the active industries which were once in the village only the Burgessville Fruit Growers' Co-Operative remains.

Elias Snyder first settled the area in 1811. Other families arrived in 1816, 1820 and 1819. The township, then known as Norwich, was settled earlier than others by a colony of New York settlers. Headed by Peter Lossing, they were wealthy and could pay to have help in clearing their land.

Peter Lossing prepared a map of the territory in 1821, but it was not until 1845 that the first

store was opened. Schooling, however, had a much earlier beginning, the first log classroom being built in 1812. In 1843, a sum of £43 and five shillings was voted for the construction of a new school building.

In 1821 Edward West Burgess was born in the vicinity of the village which was to take his name. He led the community for many years, and was blacksmith, carriage maker, postmaster, and station agent. (The station was closed in 1936).

Church life of Burgessville was perhaps symbolic of church life in other places in early Upper Canada. The first Baptist Church was established there in 1837. Elder Elliott was the first of a long list of pastors. Preaching in those days was more of a community service than a profession. For instance, Elliott's remuneration for one year consisted of 60 bushels of wheat. Some years later, when the pulpit had been vacated, Elder Leamon was given \$50 on condition that he preach for a trial period of six months. At the end of the time a vote on his abilities was taken, but as the vote was evidently divided he decided not to stay.

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June 11, 1949



# The Jenvey Files

Research from the files of Byron G. Jenvey

## BURGESSVILLE

The name Burgessville was formerly Synder's Corners. This was because the first settler to come to this part of Norwich Township was, Elias Snyder, who arrived in 1811. He was the eleventh settler in the entire township. In 1848, the name was changed to Burgessville by popular vote. It was named for Edward West Burgess, who was born here in 1827.

He opened the first blacksmith shop and the first carriage works in 1844. He was Post Master for 30 years.

Other pioneer settlers were Joshua Corbin in 1816, the Dennis families in 1820, the Elnighs in 1819, and Captain John Jacques in 1835. Elias Snyder took up the farm on the north west corner. In 1886, 380 acres of North Norwich Township were set aside for the village and in 1915 it became a police village with its own trustees.

The village had a flax mill, a carding mill, shoe shop, blacksmith shop, a carriage factory, a flour and grist mill, a tailor shop and a tinsmith shop.

The first train passed through the village in 1875 and trains ceased to run here in 1941. Edward Farrington (son of Harvey Farrington who built the first co-operative cheese factory in Canada in 1864 about three miles south) built a similar cheese factory at the north end of Burgessville, shortly after the 1864 factory was built. This factory continued until purchased by the Borden Company.

The school house of the village followed the usual pattern of pioneer settlements - first of logs, then frame and then brick. Elias Snyder and his son Elias H. Snyder were pioneer teachers. James H. Farrington, who later became a dentist, taught the village school in 1866 and for a few years thereafter.

The Baptist church of Burgessville was organized in 1837 by three men - John Harris of Townsend, Simon Mabee of West Oxford (Piper's Corners) and Jesse Woodward of Norwich. There were 19 charter members. In 1849 they built a meeting house which became a barn on the Snyder farm after the brick church was erected in 1870. This church was dedicated in 1871 by Dr. Fyfe of the Baptist College in Woodstock. Many improvements have been made to this church since its erection.

The first regular Methodist church was erected on the present site. It was of brick construction and erected in 1887. The congregation was organized two years previously. The first ministers were Reverend Albert Kennedy and Reverend T. Webster Kelly. It was a five point circuit at the time. The present red brick church was built in 1899 and the red brick parsonage in 1908. The parsonage was first occupied by the Reverend C.L. Poole. The church was dedicated in January 1900. In 1899, Solomon Burgess circulated a petition for funds to erect a belfry and his own death was strangely the

first for which the bell was tolled.

The W.M.S. of this church was organized in 1893 and celebrated its diamond anniversary in 1953. Mrs. James Butchart was its first president.

Burgessville has had three banks. First, the ill-fated Farmer's Bank, then the Traders and then the Royal. There has been no bank in the village for several years.

The Franklin Hotel was a popular hotel in the early days. It was operated by Edward O'Neill, a genial hotel keeper who attracted business. It has been a dwelling for several years.

The Dufferin flour mills and lumber mills were opened and operated by T.E. Mollins and Son for 60 years. Both of these businesses were destroyed by fire. The Women's Institute began in 1911.

The head office of the North Norwich Telephone System was in Burgessville. The carding mill was operated by Alfred Pollard in 1870 and the tailor shop by Theodore Pollard.

## COW STORY, 1930

A millionaire from New York State, who was also a senator, came to Oxford to see if he could locate a light-colored Holstein Cow which would weigh a ton.

The state fair was to be held in his city in the near future and he wanted this cow as a special exhibit. On arriving in Oxford, he was driven to the farm of Elias Snyder of Burgessville. Snyder at the time, had the reputation of being the heaviest feeder of Dairy cattle in the county.



The senator had brought a tape measure with him, which when put around the heart-girth of a cow, immediately behind the front legs, would record the weight of the cow.

The recorded weight, by the tape, was 2,250 pounds. The standard weight of a Holstein cow in the county was 1,200 pounds.

The senator bought the cow, she being exactly what he wanted. The cow was shipped to his station accompanied by an attendant. The senator erected a large tent on the fair grounds and put this big cow on a platform, elevated a foot above the grass.

Plaque cards were put above the stage giving age and weight.

A man was placed at the entrance of the tent to record the number attending. Two weeks after the show was over a letter was received here in Oxford, stating that 82,000 people went through the tent to view the ton cow. On the last day of the fair, a Saturday, the senator had no voice.

A letter from the farm secretary stated that the cow would be put in a special pen on the 1,500 acre farm, owned by the senator. The farm housed 100 head of dairy cattle. The senator also owned another dairy farm, that of 900 acres, a distance of 15 miles away. The shipping bill for the cow stated that she weighed 2,240 pounds.

Who of you, has seen even a horse that weighed as much as this cow?

INGERSOLL TIMES

August 30, 1978



# Librarian's outside work helps her daily

Special column  
for The Sentinel-Review  
by SAM COGHLAN  
chief county librarian

Visitors to Burgessville's Sunday flea market must sometimes glance across the corners and comment on how much the Burgessville library resembles a bungalow. I don't know whether the Township of Norwich intended the symbolism when they used centennial funds (1967) to build the library, but it fits. Hundreds of kids in Burgessville and area know the library well and feel at home there.

Anybody who's been a kid in Burgessville since 1973 knows Mary Yeoman, our branch head there. She's been organizing story hours, pointing kids towards good books to read, helping with school projects, encouraging kids to read during the summer through the Summer Reading Program.

Many adults know that Yeoman is also a master gardener. She is just as talented at getting green things to grow as she is with the kids. Four times a year when Yeoman picks out the 400 or so books to go back to county library headquarters for book exchange she is performing a task that we librarians call "weeding". The garden analogy applies better, though, to the planting that takes place with each book that is borrowed. The whole community reaps the benefits.

To me, as county librarian, the gardener Mary is "her other life". But it is clear from the fact that she is often called upon to teach

and to give talks on the subject, that gardening is not just a casual hobby to her.

All of our branch heads have a life outside the library. In a way, I regret not having the benefit of their full-time dedication, but that is just not possible with branches that are open only six to 15 hours per week. Yeoman is a good example, of how the main part of their lives spills over into, and has a positive effect on, their library work. She mentioned to me how she enjoys the challenge of figuring out exactly what it is that somebody wants. For example, a young library user recently had Yeoman ready to start searching for books about volcanoes. She delved further, though, and discovered that the question was actually for a science project, "How much baking soda should you add to vinegar to cause an eruption?". Mary obviously knows her kids as well as she does her chrysanthemums and roses.

To be many things is a necessity of country living. Edward West Burgess, for whom Burgessville was named in 1848, was postmaster and station agent for the railroad. He did blacksmithing and started a carriage making business. He also ran a farm. Yeoman, and our other branch heads, are evidence that this need to be many things has not changed. The library benefits from the wealth of knowledge and skills they bring to their part-time library job.

## IT'S MID-MARCH BREAK!

We've now experienced a good half of 1990's March break. Kids

have been enjoying the temporary respite from the rigours of daily school attendance. Parents who have been fortunate enough to be able to take a break themselves have been enjoying quality family time. A good number of kids and parents alike have already taken advantage of the several terrific special events being hosted in our branches this week.

There's still two days of fun and entertainment to be had at four of our county library branches. Phil Romain will sing and tell stories at Norwich and Innerkip on Thursday and Nancy Cole will be bringing puppets Baby Susie and her friends to Thamesford and Ingersoll on Friday.

Thursday, March 15

NORWICH — Phil Romain, Norwich Library, 10:00 a.m.

INNERKIP — Phil Romain, Innerkip Library, 2:00 p.m.

Friday, March 16

THAMESFORD — Nancy Cole, Westminster Church Hall, 10:30 a.m.

INGERSOLL — Nancy Cole, St. James Anglican Church Hall, 2:00 p.m.

The help of the Outreach Ontario program of the Ministry of Culture and Communications and the Southern Ontario Library Service is greatly appreciated for making Nancy Cole's presence possible.

Admission to Nancy Cole is \$1 per person. Phil Romain's performances are free.

SENTINEL REVIEW

March 14, 1990





## OXFORD'S GHOST TOWNS

During recent months, as *Sentinel-Review* photographer Ted Town went about his regular assignments, he's been gathering photos of the vanished settlements that are the ghost towns of Oxford County. Another is Hawtreys: located in South Norwich Township on Baseline Road, and on the Canada Southern Railway, a post office was established here in 1866. It is uncertain how the name was chosen, although a long-time postmaster believed it to be the name

of a poetess. In *The Amelia Polden History of the Norwiches*, written at the turn of the century, there is mention made of a hotel, although the writer claims "the place has made no material progress for years." The picture shows the former American Express (!) office.

W.J. Wintemberg, reprinted from the Ontario Historical Society's *Records and Papers*, Volume XXII, 1925.

SENTINEL REVIEW

May 10, 1889



## New dam at Norwich fulfills dual purpose

NORWICH — One of the biggest projects in this community's history was completed and put into operation in 1966.

The Norwich dam and reservoir, a water control structure built by the Otter Creek Conservation Authority, is located in the northwest section of the village, across the main branch of Big Otter Creek.

Construction was started in 1965 and completed in 1966 at a cost of \$155,000. The provincial government paid 75 per cent and the Authority 25 per cent. Contributing to the authority's share was the village of Norwich, 45 per cent, and North Norwich Township, 30 per cent. The remainder was paid from the authority's annual levy.

The dam may be used to control the level of the 60,000,000-gallon lake so that flood crests which cannot be contained in the channel can be stored and later released when the flood danger has passed. At periods of low summer flow, water can be released from the reservoir to augment downstream flow.

The 90 acres of land around the reservoir is being developed for outdoor recreation such as picnics, swimming and boating, reforestation and wildlife conservation.

A \$250,000 building program will provide five more rooms at Norwich District High School in mid-February. Two classrooms have been added, along with a typing room and bookkeeping room. There is a new industrial arts shop and the former shop was converted to a marketing room, with some space added to the home economics department.

A proposed \$400,000 to \$500,000 sewage disposal system for Norwich has been shelved. The project was deemed too costly.

Three grain silos with a capacity of 5,000 bushels each, a grain dryer and a new truck hoist were built at the Norwich District Co-operative in September. Cost was \$60,000.

Head office of the co-op is Norwich. Other branches are lo-

cated at Burford and Burgessville.

Pollard Bros. Dairy was sold to Silverwood Dairies Ltd., in February.

The Norwich PUC built a new garage and storage building at the corner of Front and Pitcher Streets. Cost was \$12,000 for the structure, completed in September.

The new \$42,000 Pollard bridge on Quaker Street, over Otter Creek, was finished in early October. It is located a half-mile west of Highway 59, about a mile north of Norwich.

Five new homes are under construction in Norwich, all electrically heated. Population is up to 1,672 from 1,666. Taxable assessment is up to \$2,081,316 from last year's \$2,061,836.

The North Norwich Municipal Telephone System is planning to convert 700 of its subscribers in the Burgessville area to dial in 1967. Tentative date is Aug. 20. The \$210,000 project includes a new dial exchange building, completed in September. Equipment installation will begin in May. About 60 miles of cable will be buried underground.



## Quakers Settled Norwich

ITS KEYS YELLOWED with age, its quaint old-fashioned appearance forming a striking contrast with the modern furnishings around it, the little old melodeon that first provided music in a Burford Township church sits in the home of Mrs. Henry Decker, Norwich.

It was Mrs. Decker's father, Scottish-born Peter McIntosh, who used to carry the melodeon back and forth from his home to Burford Village Congregational Church which was organized in 1835.

Following Mr. McIntosh's death in 1906, the old four-octave melodeon was left to Mrs. Decker and it still rests in Mrs. Decker's Norwich home in perfect working order.

The Village of Norwich itself

began in 1828 when the first store was opened by William Barker, but it was not until its incorporation in 1876 that it became officially known as Norwich. Previously it had been called Norwichville.

Much of the village now stands on property originally owned by Michael Stover.

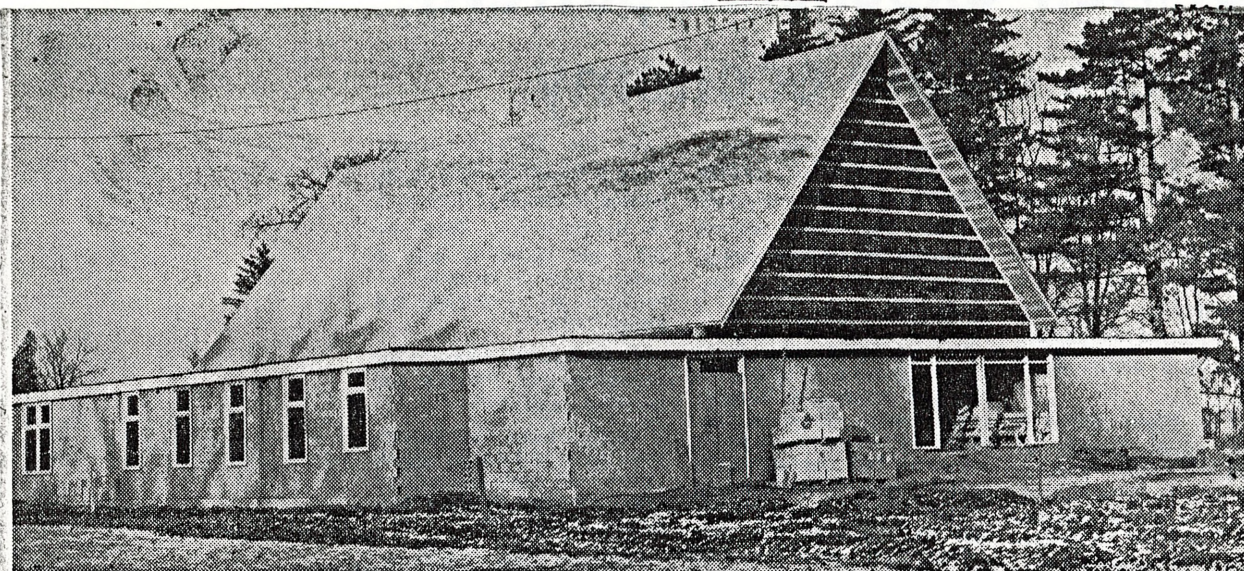
Some of the early business included a wagon and sleigh making shop started by James Wickham in 1842.

At first members of the Society of Friends were more numerous than any other group of settlers. They settled on Quaker street a mile north of the village proper. It was in this Quaker settlement that the first church, the first school and first post office were established.

LONDON FREE PRESS

June 11, 1949





School, church expansion seen

## Norwich continues moderate growth

NORWICH—Moderate progress has been the story of this South Oxford County village of 1,700 for several years with 1968 indicating a continuation of this steady growth.

Population increased by 28 persons. Fifteen new homes

were constructed in various areas. An indication of stability is shown in the fact that Norwich has no vacant houses and very few for sale.

The Norwich dam and reservoir was officially opened in June but had been in opera-

tion for some months previously. Costing \$155,000, it was built by the Otter Creek Conservation Authority and is located in the northwest section of the village, across the main branch of Big Otter Creek. The 50 acres of land around the reservoir are being developed for outdoor recreation.

Four thousand trees have been planted, the land has been seeded and levelled and picnic tables added.

Norwich has a well-known game conservation area with wild ducks and geese. It is proposed to stock with fish in the spring.

The Norwich Library be-

came part of the county library system in January, 1967, and the village's centennial grant was turned over for the new Oxford County library building in Woodstock.

A five room, \$250,000 addition at Norwich District High School was opened in September. There are two classrooms, a typing room, book-keeping room and new industrial arts shop. Some space was added to the home economics department.

Norwich Public School has been bulging for some time and some classes are being conducted in the library basement. Study of additional accommodation needs is scheduled this year.

The Netherland Reformed Church, with a congregation of 500, is under construction, with possible completion by June. Cost is estimated around \$150,000 for the building located off Main Street, East.

In recreation, the Norwich curling club has a campaign on for a \$70,000 rink and equipment. A tentative site has been chosen on Water Street.

Both fire and police protection were boosted during the year. A \$3,000 fire truck was purchased from Toronto Township in August. It is expected the fire hall will either be enlarged or a new one built. Chief Fred McKay has 14 on his volunteer staff.

Police Chief Kenneth McCloy has a new police cruiser available for his force of three officers.

New structure taking shape at Norwich is the \$150,000 project at left, being built by the 500-member Norwich and district congregation of the Netherlands Reformed Church.

LONDON FREE PRESS

January 20 1968



# Norwich expansion pattern reflects stable economy

NORWICH—A combination of stability and growth powers the economy of this South Oxford County village. Fifteen new homes were built in 1968, employment in two key industries improved, several businesses expanded and population rose by a modest 24 to 1,668.

The West Taylor Bickle & Co. Ltd. broom factory on Main Street, with employment around the 50-mark, added staff for busier seasons. Gorman Wood Ltd., manufacturers of wood containers also increased payroll, with 40 to 50 on the job from time to time.

Church expansion was prominent last year. Nether-

lands Reformed Church building was completed, costing \$150,000 with seating capacity of 500. The former church originally the old high school, was sold and is being converted to apartments.

The old Society of Friends Church at the edge of the village was acquired by Norwich and District Historical Society for renovation as a museum. The Quakers were first to settle in the Norwich area in 1828. It was here that the Quakers built the first church, first school and first post office.

The historical society has several articles for a good start towards an outstanding museum, officials report.

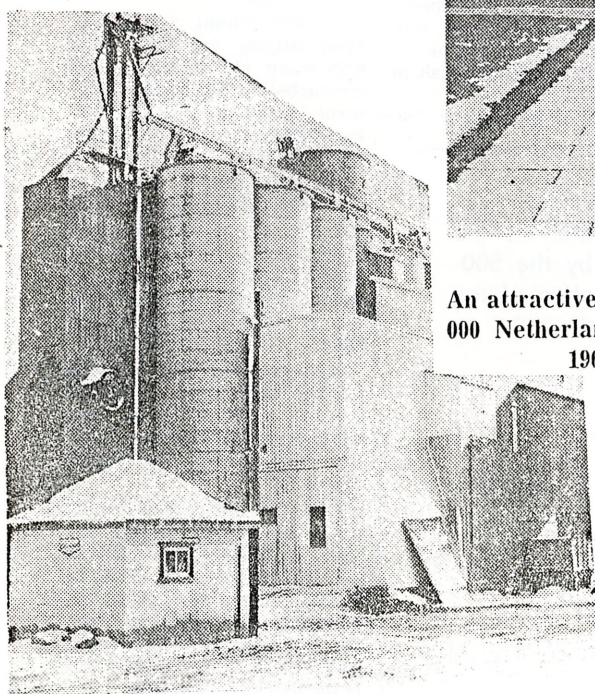
The new Norwich Curling Club, a \$72,000 project, is operating at capacity. First curling started Dec. 2. There are 127 male members and 50 women. Four sheets of ice are available, plus kitchen and lounge facilities.

Norwich Public School is overcrowded and requires one portable classroom.

Norwich Farm Maintenance Ltd., operated by Harry Thorne and Sons, commenced manufacturing tobacco bale presses during 1968.

Anderson Pro Hardware, formerly Pitz Hardware, is a new business managed by Gerry Fry. The store is one of a chain operated by B. W. Anderson, of Simcoe.

Eric Bornheimer took over dealership of Gare Motors, a General Motors agency.



Backing the village's reputation as a farm supply centre is the Norwich District Co-Op, with complete facilities to serve area farmers.



An attractive structure in Norwich is the new \$150,000 Netherlands Reformed Church, completed in 1968. Seating capacity is 500.

LONDON FREE PRESS

January 11, 1969



## Community once a rebel hotbed

# Museum helps relate Norwich' rousing past

**NORWICH** — Looks can be deceiving.

Driving through Norwich Township gives the impression it's just the same sort of farming communities as other areas of the county.

But digging back into history, the district was a hotbed of rebel activity and the land was cultivated by members of a disappearing religious order.

Norwich and area has always been agriculturally oriented, and while enough tales have been told of harsh pioneer living people, this area has some interesting differences.

The best place to find out about Norwich' history is at the Norwich Historical Museum on Highway 59.

Curator Gretchen Pollock said the Norwich Historical Society has been active since the 1930s. Through the society's work and with the generosity of township residents, the museum holds some impeccable furniture and historical artifacts, arranged in a fashion characterizing a typical home of about 1880 to 1900.

### THE QUAKERS

The museum's exhibits tell the story of the area, with the first chapter starting in 1809. That was the year Peter Lossing, a Quaker, came up from New York and bought 15,000 acres at 50 cents an acre. That was almost the entire former North Norwich Township.

Acting as a land agent, he

slowly sold the land to other Quakers who settled in the area soon after.

They soon had a Quaker Church (now the museum), where they practiced their services. Mrs. Pollock said they didn't have ministers, but spoke themselves after "waiting for the spirit to move them."

If nobody felt moved, nobody spoke.

It was a boring religious practice and probably the reason it has almost disappeared from the township, she said.

## Story and photos

by Linda Hulme

"It was a way of life, not just a religion," she said, but added they managed to make their own fun as well.

Their dress and way of living were plain, but they certainly weren't backwards in their thinking.

### EQUAL RIGHTS

Women enjoyed equal rights, said Mrs. Pollock, and were educated as thoroughly as the men.

No illiteracy here.

While a plain folk, they also believed in good government.

During the 1837 rebellion, a group of men set out for Toronto to aid William Lyon MacKenzie in overcoming the Family Compact, a government hardly representative of its governed.

But MacKenzie was defeated by the time they reached Scotland.

Mrs. Pollock said most were arrested, and one rebel was hanged.

The rest of the exhibits are a lot more general, such as the doll collection, the parlor, the dining room, and the kitchen, but still fascinating.

The artifacts are in excellent condition, and while most would look familiar to a seasoned historian, there are some oddities inherent in the exhibits.

Mrs. Pollock noted the "Perfect Pantry" as one of the most unusual. This approximately 115 year old tin wall unit was used as a replacement to the conventional pantry. It was tin, to keep the mice out, and had space for flour, sugar, tea, spices, and the like. She said she hasn't seen anything like it.

Another unusual item is a copper tea urn. Holding at least 20 cups of tea, the large round object is heated by a column-like stone which dips into the middle. A spout is found at the bottom.

Another vast array of artifacts is found in the basement and the barn behind the museum holds a generous share of farm implements.

And after a complete day of looking, a visit to the museum wouldn't be complete without a look in the Archives, the only one in Oxford County.

But that's another story.

SENTINEL REVIEW

July 10, 1982





**THE NORWICH** District Historical Museum, located on Highway 59 just north of Norwich,

is chock full of displays and artifacts depicting the area as it was more than 100 years ago.





**GRETCHEN POLLOCK**, curator at the Norwich District Historical Museum, holds up one of the old dolls on display in the toy section of the museum. The doll was

found by a Norwich Township resident in the Holbrook dump. He removed the doll and restored it to the beautiful piece pictured here.

SENTINEL REVIEW

July 10, 1982



# NORWICH

By ART WILLIAMS

In a territorial division of Canada West made on July 16th, 1799, Norwich was made a portion of the County of Norfolk. By an Act of Parliament, which came into effect, Jan. 1st, 1800, Norwich became part of the County of Oxford.

On July 22nd, 1800, Mr. Wilcox, of York (now Toronto), received from the Crown a grant of 15,000 acres of land lying east of the middle town line, and from the 1st to the 12th concessions.

Norwich was for many years a township consisting of 12 concessions, one mile in width, numbering from North to South and having 28 lots of 200 acres each in each concession, exclusive of the Gore on the east side. In 1855 it was divided into North and South Norwich; the road passing between the 6th and 7th concessions being the boundary line.

During 1809, Peter Lossing came from Dutchess County, N. Y. to look for a suitable home for himself and family, and being informed that there were desirable lands opened up in Oxford County, he visited them and found that they suited him.

He returned to Canada the same fall, (1809), accompanied by his brother-in-law, Peter De Long, (also of Dutchess County, N. Y.) and they purchased from Mr. Wilcox, of York, (now Toronto), for 50 cents per acre, his entire tract of land, 15,000 acres, in the township of Norwich; and on the 14th of July, 1810, Mr. Wilcox deeded to Peter Lossing and Peter De Long, jointly, the land referred to, first releasing a mortgage that was held against the property by one John Gray. Having secured the property, these two pioneers returned to Dutchess County to make suitable arrangements for occupying their new homes.

## FINDS SETTLERS

Peter Lossing, at once, made every effort to find persons who could purchase and settle upon the land in Norwich; and received hearty support in his project. Adam Stover agreed to accept 1,000 acres of land for each of his children who would go to Canada and live upon and improve their land. Three sons, Michael, Frederick and Adam, and one daughter, Mrs. Peter McLees, accepted the offer 3,000 acres. Many others, of their father and came to Norwich and made it their home. Joseph Lancaster agreed also decided to come to Norwich, including the Motts, the Cornwells, the Snyders, the Sackriders, the Emighs and others, about 50 families in all. Having secured the co-operation of these others, Peter Lossing and his family moved to Canada in the fall of 1810. He travelled all the way with his teams, bringing with them what goods they could, while another

portion of goods was brought by rafts and boats through the Mohawk river, Lake Champlain and Lake Ontario, his two sons and some other young men, who came to seek a home in the wilds of Canada, having the management of the expedition.

## FIRST NIGHT

Peter Lossing and his company reached Norwich with a great deal of difficulty, the first seven miles of their journey was to Cooley's Pond, via the old stage road, and the five miles from Cooley's Pond to Norwich was made by a path marked with blazed trees, which had been made by the surveyors. When they arrived at the site of their future home it was near evening, so they cut down a couple of trees and constructed a rude shelter of brush and camped for the night, the site is now occupied by the late family residence of Martin Cornwall, on Quaker Street. The first tree cut in North Norwich, was begun by Benson Lossing, then eleven years of age, and finished by his father, Peter Lossing. In a few days they had a log hut constructed on their own home farm, lot eight, third concession, in which Mr. Lossing and his sons and three men who accompanied them made their home during the winter, while they were engaged in chopping and clearing the land; they also cleared a sled road through to Cooley's Pond.

About the first of March 1811, they had completed a comfortable log house made of hewn timber with shingled roof, and Mrs. Lossing and daughters came from Burford to occupy their new home. These were the pioneer women of North Norwich. A small settlement existed where Otterville now stands, and of great importance it was for there was a small grist mill there built of logs, with no road to it but a bridge path.

Sears Mott, with wife and family of six children, also moved into Norwich township in 1810, and settled on the farm on Quaker street. In 1811, a number of families arrived in Norwich, viz., Peter De Long's, Michael Stover's, Frederick Stover's; Solomon Sackrider's, John and Elias Moore's, John Siple's, Peter McLees; in 1812 Henry Hilliker's, John Palmer's, William Curtis' and in 1813 Joseph Woodrow.

The statistical returns of 1818 gave 11 heads of families and 67 children of these families.

Peter Lossing, being a minister among Friends, established religious services in his house in 1811, and this was the beginning of Friends' meetings here. In the spring of 1811, he brought a number of apple trees from near Vittoria, and planted them on his farm, and the same fall they bore an apple, which is supposed to have been the first fruit grown in the township.

## WAGON ROAD

Peter De Long with his family moved into Norwich in the spring of 1811; he left his family with Mr. Yeigh for six weeks, while the men cut a wagon road into Norwich, and erected his first house on the north half of lot 10 in the 4th concession and therein was born the first white child in the township in the person of Garry V. De Long, on the 2nd day of Nov. 1811 and he afterward became the first reeve of the township.

David De Long, brother to Peter, moved to Norwich the next year, 1812 and purchased the lot opposite his brother on the south side of the concession and lived on the same farm until he died in his ninety-third year.

William Hulet, father of Charles Hulet, was the first teacher in the township, the school was opened in the fall of 1812, in a small log house on the bank of the Otter, the attendance was 15. A few months later a second school was commenced in the northern part of the settlement, teacher Elias Snyder, now Burgessville School, average attendance during the winter of 25. Early in 1813 the south school was discontinued and one started in Peter Lossing's house, with Peter Lossing as teacher.

The first marriage in the township was in 1812, and was performed by B. Mallory, Esq., MPP, the contracting parties being George Wright and Miss Susan Mott. In 1813 John Palmer was married to a daughter of Frederick Stover's. They were members of Friends and there being no way for them to be married in their denomination, they went on horseback, 80 miles, to the township of Pelham, Welland County. In 1815, George Southwick and Mrs. Paulina Howard, daughter of Peter Lossing, were married, and they too travelled on horseback to Pelham, accompanied by their groomsman and bridesmaid for the marriage. Mr. and Mrs. Southwick were the parents of the late Mrs. Mary Ann Treffry.

Thomas Hornor, Esq., a magistrate residing near Princeton, frequently came to Norwich, to perform the rites of marriage. In those days no minister of any denomination except the Church of England was permitted to do so.

## NO POSTAL SERVICE

One great inconvenience in the pioneer days was the lack of postal service, as no post office was established in the county until 1821 at Ingersoll, and a post office was established at Burford about the same time.

The nearest post office was Ancaster, then about 55 miles by the roads.

Persons travelling from the Eastern frontier or to it were often made the carrier of letters. When a post office was established in Burford there was a weekly mail which arrived on Saturday evening making Sunday, a delivery day and people travelled many miles in the hopes of getting a letter.

Correspondence was rather expensive then, postage on a letter from England, sixty cents, from New York, twenty-five.

In the summer of 1811 there were eleven families in the township, 5,200 acres of land had been taken up, the first season 32 acres had been put in crop, the second 735 acres.

In 1820 the surplus wheat of Norwich amounted to several thousand bushels and it had to be teamed to Ancaster. The roads were rough and difficult to travel, so that twenty-five bushels was considered a full load and it required a three days' journey.

The first doctor to settle in Norwich township was Dr. Ephriam Cooke who came in 1831.

One of the ancient institutions in the township was the early town-meeting. The first one held in the township was in 1816, and they met at a hotel kept by Caleb Tompkins, the younger, just one mile north of the village of Norwich, then called Gommorah, later Carolan's Corners. The house was occupied later by Thomas Carolan, who had a blacksmith shop on the south side of the road. In that hotel the township meetings were held to appoint the path-master, pound-keepers, assessors, collectors, etc., which was done by the choice of the people by open vote. There the courts were held, Joseph Woodrow, John G. Lossee, Solomon Lossing being the first Commissioners appointed by the Government, constituting what was known as the Commissioner's Court of Requests.

## ELECTION

The first election for the township of Norwich was held in the village of Norwich in 1850, with James Bass, returning officer and John McKee, poll clerk. The councillors elected were Garry V. De Long, John Griffin, Michael Stover, Truman Wilcox and Asa Durkee. The council chose Garry V. De Long for reeve. In 1855 the township of Norwich was divided into North and South Norwich and in 1856 the first reeve of North Norwich was Hiram Van Valkenburg. In 1871 Thomas Abraham was Warden of the county. In 1876 the village of Norwich became independent of the township. The village of Burgessville in 1886 was set apart from the township for local improvement purposes, first being called Snyder's Corners after Elias Snyder who came in 1811 and who was the second teacher in the township and continued as teacher for several years, but afterwards took up land. Joshua Corbin was another early settler who settled near where the village now is in 1816. The Dennis family settled near Burgessville in 1820 and the street running west from the four corners, is named Dennis street. Capt. John Jacques moved into Burgessville in 1835 and was one



of the prominent families in the early history of the village. During the Rebellion of 1835 he was captain of a Company of Royal Volunteers and was stationed in Norwich village for some time. The names of Topham and Emigh are also found in early records. E. W. Burgess was born in the vicinity about 1821 and when the name was changed to Burgessville it was in his honor. He served as postmaster for 30 years and station agent for 18 years. Nelson Batterson started the first store in 1845 at Snyder's Corners and in 1887 Henry Sneath started a general store in Burgessville.

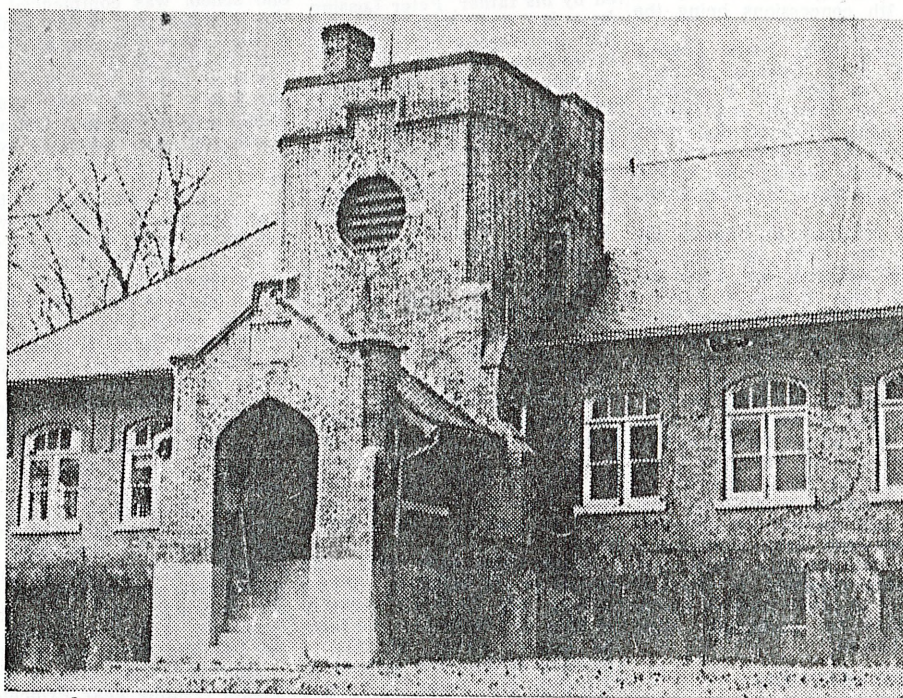
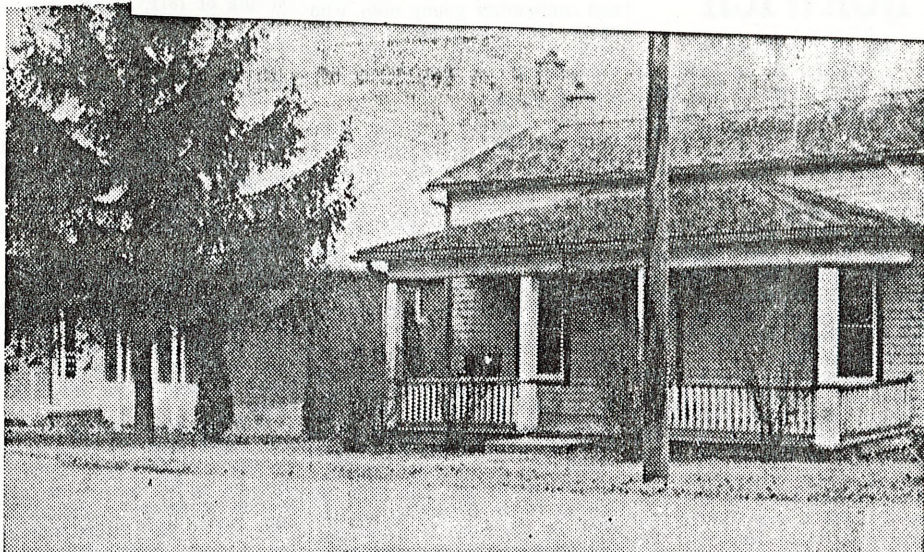
#### SCHOOLS

The second school in the township was a log school and was known as school district No. 3. The red brick school built in 1905 is the third school on this site. The present school system for North Norwich centres in Burgessville where a new school was built last year and five buses bring 332 pupils daily, for the grades one to six. Grades 7 and 8 receive their education in the old continuation school.

Burgessville possesses one of the smallest free libraries; it was organized in 1910. The first cheese factory was started by Harvey Farrington, three miles south of the village and later one started in the village and was later purchased by Borden's. The Burgessville Fruit Co-operative was once the leading industry but has been purchased by the Pxford Fruit Co-operative and mostly storage is done here now. The independent telephone company was organized in 1905. The township took it over as a municipal telephone system in 1927.

The Port Dover and Goderich Railroad first entered Burgessville in 1875 and was later known as the Grand Trunk, now the CNR. The station closed in 1936 leaving a single train a day from Norwich. This was discontinued in 1941.

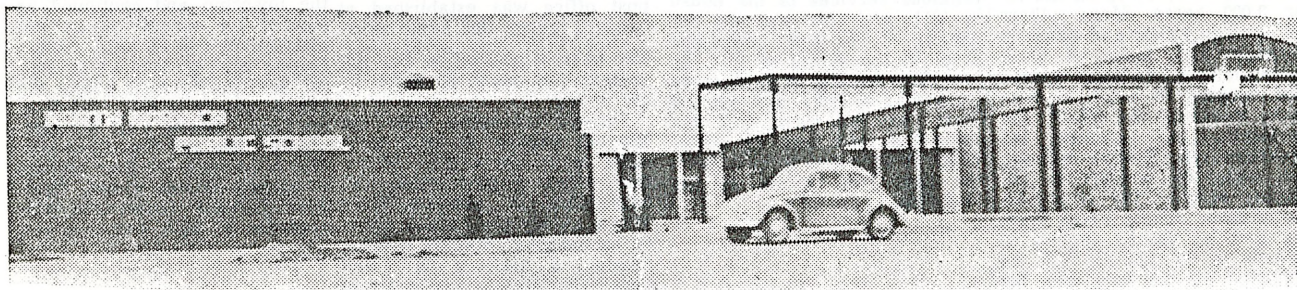
The first church was the Baptist Congregation organized in 1837 with services being held in the Dennis School and Elder Elliott was the first minister until 1846. The first church building was erected in 1849 and the Methodist congregation organized in 1885. In 1887 the first church building was erected on the present site.



**Bottom**  
The **TOP** photo shows the new school which serves all of North Norwich. The 10 room school has 322 pupils which are transported by five buses. G. Harvey is the principal of the new school. In the

**MIDDLE** picture is part of the home of Edward Burgess for whom the village is named and was the first post office in Burgessville. The new post office is at the left. The **LOWER** photo shows the third

school in SS No. 3 school section which was built in 1905 after the white brick school burned. The original was a log school built about 1812. (Staff Photos).



SENTINEL REVIEW

April 14 1962



# Quaker Peter Lossing Opened Norwich Area To Settlement In 1809

With land values at their present peak, it's hard to realize that one of the first substantial land sales in the area later to become Norwich was 15,000 acres at 50 cents per acre. This purchase was made by Peter Lossing in 1809, from Mr. Wilcox of York (now Toronto).

Peter Lossing is believed to have first ventured into Oxford to attend a meeting of the Society of Friends (Quakers). His home was in Dutchess County, N.Y., but he quickly saw the desirability of the new land and its possibilities.

Farmers in Dutchess County were in a state of unrest, with a long feud between small farmers and the wealthy landowners. In addition, most of the Dutchess County farmers were Quakers and they objected to the republican form of government in the United States.

## NOW NORWICH

With his brother-in-law, Peter DeLong, Lossing purchased the 15,000 acres that now form the town of Norwich and part of the townships of Norwich. It was not hard to dispose of the enormous tract of land. Among the first settlers taking parcels of land were three Stover brothers,

Michael, Frederick and Adam, and their sister, Mrs. Peter McLees, Joseph Lancaster, the Motts, the Cornwells, the Snyders the Sackriders and the Emighs.

Peter Lossing himself moved with his family to the area in the fall of 1810. He travelled all the way with his teams, bringing as many supplies as he could, supplemented by another portion of goods brought by rafts and boats through the Mohawk River, Lake Champlain and Lake Ontario.

After spending a few days at the home of John Yeigh in Burford (who kept an open house for travellers and new settlers), Peter Lossing started the last wearisome trek to Norwich accompanied by his three sons, Solomon, Edmund and Benson, two hired men and a surveyor named Halstead. The women in the party, Mrs. Mary Lossing and daughter Athelinda, remained at Burford.

## HARD TREK

Part of the trek was through a forest marked by blazed trees and when the small party finally reached their future home, their first shelter was simply constructed of a few branches from trees. The first tree cut in North Norwich by a white settler was given the first few strokes of the axe by Benson Lossing, then 11 years of age. His father finished the job, a heavy one for a young boy.

Within a few days the party had a log house constructed on what was to be the home farm, lot 8, concession 3. Here the men made their home for the winter. By the following March they had completed a comfortable log dwelling with a shingled roof and the women came from Burford to occupy their new home.

The other settlers gradually arrived and statistics of 1818 show that 11 heads of families with 67 children then were established on the land.

Peter Lossing established religious services for the Society of Friends in his own home in 1811. In the spring of that year he also brought a number of fruit trees from near Vittoria and the first scant fruit

appeared on these trees that fall. It was believed to be the first fruit cultivated in the township.

## PETER DELONG

Peter DeLong moved with his family to Norwich that same year. Following the Lossing pattern, he left his family at the easier conditions in Burford for six weeks while the men cut a wagon road into Norwich and erected a house. Here the first white child in the township was born, Garry V. DeLong, who was eventually to become the first reeve of the township.

Another member of the DeLong family, Peter's brother David, moved to Norwich in 1812. He purchased the lot opposite his brother's land and lived a long hearty life here until he died in his 93rd year.

## SURPLUS WHEAT

By 1820 the surplus wheat of Norwich amounted to several thousand bushels and it had to be teamed to Ancaster. The roads were rough and difficult to travel, and 25 bushels, requiring a three-day journey, was considered a full load.

The Lossing name continued

in prominence, with Solomon Lossing being among the first Commissioners appointed by the government, to preside over the law processes at the Commissioner's Court of Requests.

The first post office was established in Peter Lossing's house in 1830. The community was growing into an important centre which later included a cabinet factory, foundry, carriage works, tinsmithy, planing mills, brickyards, the first co-operative cheese factory, and the usual thriving stores.



# Minutes of Oxford Hist. Soc.

Norwich

Township

March 29th, 1974

Our president, Rev. H.E. Wright, acted as chairman and welcomed 67 members and friends to our meeting.

Moved by Mrs. Chisolm and seconded by Mrs. Whitehead that the minutes of the last meeting be adopted as circulated. Carried. The treasurer's report was given by Mrs. Chisholm in the absence of the Treasurer which showed a balance on hand of \$830.43. She moved the adoption of this report and this was seconded by Mrs. Lapworth.

Mrs. Benoit was kind enough to demonstrate to us the way a Goffering Iron worked in the making of wavy, flute, crimp trimmings with a heated iron. This Goffering Iron was one that had been given to her as a gift. The ladies in those days sure went to a lot of trouble to have fancy trimmings on costumes.

Mr. Bob Chesney introduced our speaker of the evening, Mrs. Marie Avey, her subject being "The History of Norwich and the Quakers".

The early story of Norwich is very much a story of the Quakers in Norwich for it was they who first settled the Township and for many years even after they were outnumbered by other groups were the effective leaders in the community. 1809 was the date Norwich first became connected with Quakers. Dorland's book - A History of the Society of Friends in Canada speaks about the Great Westward Migration of American Quakers which took place in the early 19th century. This stirred the whole Society in United States and the movement into Canada was a fringe of this. Theories given for the migration of Duches Co. Quakers to Norwich were (1) high taxation after the War of Independence and (2) rocky land. Peter Lossing, Friends Minister from Duches Co. attending a meeting in Prince Edward Co. heard of land available in Norwich area and arranged to buy 15,000 acres at 50¢ per acre. He returned to Duches Co. and persuaded many other Friends to accompany him.

In 1811 they settled on the 3rd Concession. Many of these settlers had some wealth and were able to hire labourers to assist in clearing land. Peter Lossing brought two hired men. In 1811 there were 11 families and a surplus of wheat. In 1817 a meeting house was built on Quaker Street and at that time there was a population of 170. In 1820 there were several thousand bushels of surplus wheat and this was teamed to Ancaster over very poor roads. During the next 20 to 25 years there was a great influx of settlers - some Quakers and many Methodists, Baptists and Roman Catholics. The Census of 1851 shows Norwich to be the most populous township in Oxford - a very American Township in terms of origin of 5,000 inhabitants, 900 had been born in the United States.

Anyone who has studied Canadian history is familiar with the story of William Lyon Mackenzie, the fiery little newspaperman who roused a band of York County farmers to an ill fated march on Toronto in December of 1837. But much less well known is the tale of the uprising of the Western district and the part played by the citizens of Norwich. Amelia Poldon, a Norwich historian, writing early in this century speaks of



how Norwich settlers had endured years of oppression and wrong and that "desperate diseases often require desperate remedies". Dorland mentions harassment carried on against the Quakers of Yarmouth by militia of St. Thomas and London and suggests Norwich Quakers may also have suffered in this way. Whatever reasons for or extent of grievances Dr. Charles Duncombe found it easy to stir the community up when he held meetings here in fall of 1837. Dr. Duncombe lived at Bishopgate, represented Oxford in Legislature since 1830, and was apparently reluctant to organize armed rebellion but had tried everything else. He was a prominent doctor. He and Dr. Rolph granted the first charter for Medical College. He might well have been a favored member of Family Compact. His political philosophy was that "a Nation never can rebel; those only are rebels who resist the will of the people. He envisioned a Canada free from the dynasty of a foreign governor and an Orange Oligarchy." On December 6th he held a meeting at Norwich Methodist meetinghouse and by December 10th, 180 men of Norwich began a march toward Scotland and eventually to Brantford and Hamilton. There is evidence that many others supported the cause by giving a number of fat hogs or conveying by team provisions to Scotland. Duncombe had 400 men altogether. When all assembled Duncombe received news of Mackenzie's defeat and also of the arrival in Brantford of MacNab's force as well as word of approach of loyal forces from London, Woodstock and St. Thomas. He decided on retreat to Norwich and dismissal. Duncombe's papers listing his supporters were hastily buried at Scotland. It was later dug up. It is recorded the three day sojourn in Norwich was a reign of terror. The property of the Reformers was appropriated or destroyed and some 500 men apprehended. Dr. Cook and John Tidey were sentenced to death because they were considered intelligent and had made public addresses. Dr. Cook was sent to England to be tried. He had represented South Oxford from 1854-8, carried through the charter for Canadian Literary Institute in Woodstock, postmaster, first bank manager, superintendent of schools in Norwich and director of Port Dover and Huron Railway. John Tidey, later superintendent of Oxford County Schools, a surveyor, notary public was freed.

Daniel Bedford 27, brother of transported Paul Bedford, was not so fortunate. After serving 6 months he had gone over to Detroit and returned to Canadian soil during the ill-fated Battle of Windsor in December of 1838. He was one of 44 taken prisoner. His trial occupied a whole day, according to the London Gazette and he was sentenced to death in January. He died without a struggle and his body was given to friends who brought it to Norwich. He left wife and family who left the district.

Apparently officials regarded Norwich Township as a trouble spot for some time after MacNab's march. The Militia was stationed in Burford in summer of 1838 and in John Tidey's diary there is an account of the Militia paying a visit to a school.

In August of 1839 Joseph John Gurney, a famous English Quaker Minister, visited Norwich. He felt a special duty to proclaim Christ and his peaceable reign against all tumults and factions and also prayed for Queen. Afterwards it was found there were many rebels present.



Thenstone's Gazeteer indicated that in 1844 the first election was held in which votes were cast and counted in Municipalities. Norwich gave the Reformer, Francis Hincks, three votes to every one given his opponent and yet Hincks was not elected. He lost by 20 votes. This voting pattern continued throughout the 19th century.

There are two other points on which Norwich and its Quaker people have been tied to larger events. Emily Jennings Stowe, great grand daughter of Peter Lossing, born at Norwich in 1831, was raised in the Quaker faith. Women always enjoyed a recognition of equal rights. When Emily, the mother of three children, found her husband had a serious case of tuberculosis, she realized she would have to support the family and felt that teaching, her former profession, would not be a likely way to do this so decided to become a doctor. She was turned down by the University of Toronto and so went to New York but was not allowed to practise in Canada for years. She saw her daughter become the first woman to graduate from the University of Toronto Medical School.

Another Quaker girl born in Norwich presumably exerted some influence over affairs well beyond Norwich. Hulda Randall Minthorn was born and spent her early girlhood in the area. In her early teens she moved with her parents to Iowa where she married Jesse Clark Hoover and bore a son, Herbert, who was President of the United States from 1929 to 1933. Her grandparents, Henry and Ann Wosley, are buried in the Old Friends burying ground. It is interesting to note that the family had originated in the Eastern United States and that the years in Canada were a stage in that westward movement that propelled so many Quaker families into the American Mid West.

Today there are few practising Friends in the Norwich Area. One group meets at Beaconsfield and another in the home of members in Norwich. Why their numbers declined is a bit of a mystery. Many seems to have come under the influence of Methodist evangelism and today in the Norwich United Church many members can point to a Quaker background. A certain Quaker flavor still lingers in the community. It is certainly evident in the plainness of the 19th century architecture and gravestones but possibly also in the manner and way of life of the people of Norwich.

Mr. Ed Bennett thanked the speaker for a very revealing talk on the History of Norwich and the Quakers.

The meeting adjourned and a social hour followed.

.....  
Chairman

.....  
Secretary



"The Settlement and Development of North  
Norwich Township"

The early settlers of a great part of this country were displaced persons for religious reasons, reasons of loyalty to the British Crown or other persecuted groups. These groups formed settlements in various locations and for a hundred years or so were almost independent and isolated retaining their individual cultures and original family names. This has been the case in the Norwich area. The original white settlers were mainly Quakers. These people prospered and multiplied to populate a great part of Norwich Township. However, today there are only a handful of Quakers remaining, with one small Meeting House still in use in the North-East corner of North Norwich township. Two years ago one of their Churches was donated to the Norwich and District Historical Society to be used as a Museum.

As recently as 1810, Norwich township was an unbroken forest with no roads except possibly a blazed trail. The Township of Norwich was part of Norfolk County from 1792 to 1798 when by Act of Parliament, Norwich, Burford, Blenheim, Blandford, and East Oxford Townships became Oxford County.

In 1809, Peter Lossing, a minister of the Friends Church, purchased 15,000 acres from Mr. Wilcox, which constituted that part of the township lying east of the Middle Town Line, and almost the entire length north and south, who in turn sold it to members of the Society of Friends and their families. Previous to this time other settlements had already been made at Beachville and Ingersoll and a road of sorts already existed across this county - known as the Stage Road. By 1811, there were 11 families established in the area of Norwichville and by 1817, 170 persons with 22 producing farms. A workable, independent community soon developed with churches, school mill blacksmith, etc. The first school opened in 1812 at Norwich with 15 students and later one at Burgessville with 25 students. The community was without a doctor until 1831 but had a very capable nurse who acted as physician.

Probably the greatest obstacle of the future development of the area was the forest. An English writer, Mrs. Anna Jameson, wrote of the forest between Brantford and Woodstock as follows: "No one who has a single atom of imagination can travel through these forest roads without being strongly impressed and excited. The seemingly indeterminable lines of trees before you, the boundless wilderness around, the mysterious depths amid the



multitudinous foliage, where foot of man hath never trod, and which partial gleams of the noontide sun, now seen, now lost, lit up with a changeful magical beauty, the solitude in which we proceeded mile after mile, no human being within sight".

During the next twenty years or so, large numbers of settlers soon took up all the available land, including the westerly half of the township, a good portion of which was being sold by a Mr. Throckmorton who had received a large grant from the Crown.

The first municipal meeting was held in 1816 at Gommorah. At this meeting, Assessor, Tax Collector, Pound Keepers and Path Master, were elected by open vote. In 1841 the District of Brock was created which was to centre around Woodstock and which had erected the Court House and Jail required by the seat of Government by an 1837 Act of Parliament. The 1876 Historical Atlas of Oxford County stated: "From present appearances, Norwich bids fair to rival the most progressive of the towns of Oxford. Situated half way between Woodstock and Simcoe it is the centre of the most wealthy portion of the County. It is the resting place of that company of Quakers who contributed so materially to the well-being of the County. The Port Dover and Port Huron Railway and the Brantford and Port Burwell Railway cross in Norwich. It is the centre of the great fruit section, and the cheese business. Norwich has large manufacturing establishments taking its size into account. It is the residence of Gilbert Moore esq., president of the Port Dover and Port Huron Railway, and of Dr. Carroll, president of the Brantford and Port Burwell Railway. The Agricultural Exhibitions in Norwich are evidence of a long accustomed wealth, and there is a thrift that is exceedingly pleasant to notice in the homesteads of the Norwich people."

In 1855, an Act of Parliament divided Norwich Township into North and South Norwich. Other than Norwich village, thriving villages developed at Springford, Otterville and Burgessville. With the creation of North Norwich Township, Burgessville became the important business centre of that municipality. In 1864 Harvey Farrington started the first co-operative cheese factory in Canada. In 1906, co-operative apple handling was introduced, and this area early became known as the apple producing section of Western Ontario. In the 1890's, Rettie Bros. and Charles Hulet, farming near Burgessville, became invaluable to Oxford County's economy. The West, Taylor, Bickle Co. broom factory has been in continuous operation since 1884.

Norwich township has produced its share of successful people, to mention a few: Dr. Emily Stowe, the first woman doctor in Canada, graduating from New York Medical School in 1868. Five parliamentary representatives



have been Norwich township men - Dr. Ephriam Cook represented Oxford in the Canadian Parliament of 1864 and was at the Quebec Conference that laid the foundation for Confederation: George E. Cook was a member of the Ontario Legislature: Mr. A.T. Walker represented South Oxford in the Ontario Legislature from 1919 to 1923: Mr. T.M. Caley represented South Oxford in the Federal Government from 1926 to 1933: the Hon. Dr. D. M. Sutherland was born and educated in Norwich and represented North Oxford in the Federal Government becoming Minister of Defense: William Melville Martin was the second premier of Saskatchewan for six years and was in public service for 53 years before 1908: Mr. E.W. Nesbitt has been Oxford's Federal member for quite a number of years.



# Otterville

By ART WILLIAMS

The Government of the Province had fallen into the hands of a clique, composed chiefly of the aristocratic element, called the Family Compact. They filled almost entirely the offices of trust and had the management of the public lands. They ruled in an arbitrary manner, which made them very unpopular in the country. After seeking in vain for redress for their grievances, a party led by William Lyon Mackenzie raised a rebellion which, however, was soon quelled with the loss of only a few lives.

Of all wars a civil war is most to be dreaded, for your nearest neighbor may be your greatest enemy. Mackenzie was naturally a good man, but was led to take a wrong step. As the Family Compact had been fairly beaten by sound argument through the press and as their maltreatment of the colony had been clearly proved, if they had been patient they would have got redress. The Rebellion, however, had the effect of bringing about reforms sooner than would have been done in a constitutional way for the British Government sent out Lord Durham to inquire into the administration of affairs in Canada. His report gave the Home Government a better idea of the troubles of the colony and they

information  
missing

own good to do so. Consequently, when Colonel McNabb reached Scotland with government forces many arrests were made. Those arrested in and around Otterville were imprisoned at Otterville in a building now located at the railway crossing but which originally stood in the heart of the town. One night the wife of one of the prisoners pulled a trick which would today be considered a very serious offence for all concerned. The guards had left their arms stacked outside and went to the tavern nearby and when she saw this she threw the rifles into the mill pond and released the prisoners. The mill pond had to be drained in order to retrieve the lost rifles. No doubt there were some red faces in town that night.

## MANY WERE SOUGHT

Duncombe became a fugitive and with the aid of many friends and often dressing as a woman he was able to make his way to the border at Windsor and when he was safely into Detroit he sent word back telling them where he was. Others who were sought included Eliakim and Finlay Malcolm also Robert Alway, a Capt. Anderson and Joshua Doon. Finally Malcolm, who was later captured and tried, was sent to England with the chance of being sent to Van

Demaland (Tasmania) but the queen granted him a reprieve and sent him back to Canada with a Bible which she told him to live by. His descendants living at Sweaburg still have this precious book in their possession.

Many of the prisoners were taken to Hamilton and kept there until court sat in the spring when they were tried. They were more or less being held as hostages in hope that Duncombe and Mackenzie would surrender for the release of the prisoners.

Otterville, which is the largest community in South Norwich, is situated on the Otter Creek and though its name has been changed often, the word "Otter" always remained. When the first settlers arrived they noticed that the playful otter had mud slides all along the creek and so called the first mills Otter Creek Mills and as the village took shape it became known at Otter Creek Village. Later it was called Otter Village, and finally Otterville. The first settlers in and around Otterville arrived in 1807 and were John Earl and Paul Avery who had a grant of land and also some machinery given by the government. They realized the great future for the water power of the Otter and set about building a grist and saw mill here. Since that time at least one mill has been in operation on the river. At present there is one mill south of the main street still running by water power. Between 1850 and 1860 there were no less than 12 steam and 14 water mills in operation. Most of the mills being saw mills as this part of the country was covered with some of the finest white pine in North America and up until 1870 lumbering was the chief industry of the village and township.

## BUILDS FURNACE

About 1831 Peter Hamilton and William Hardy built an iron smelting furnace a short distance down river where they obtained good water power. They brought a great quantity of iron ore from Middleton and had the river surveyed from the lake up in hopes of it being navigable for lake barges but before this all could be accomplished an accident happened to the furnace and all was abandoned. In 1833, Art Durkee started a tannery and boot and harness business which thrived until after the turn of the century. In 1845 Edward Bullock purchased the old mill from J. C. Ferrie and it was the beginning of what is often thought of as the Bullock Era as Edward Bullock was a very energetic man and saw a great future in Otterville. He built a custom woollen mill to go along with the two flour mills and saw mills that he already owned. In 1854 a foundry was built by David Stage who

built the bell for the old school house. Other industries included the Erb's saw and foollen Mill. J. G. Williams' distillery, stock stables and grain warehouses, John Furlong's shingle and cooperage shops, the Parson's carriage works also a canning factory and Warner's Match Factory. This Match Factory was one of the first in Canada and was known as the Tip Top Match Co. These matches were crude in comparison with ours of today. They consisted of a small block of wood cut into strips but not separated, making 72 matches in a block and were coated with sulphur from a quarter to half an inch from the tip and the tip received an extra coat of white sulphur. They were all done up in paper packets containing 12 blocks. Mrs. R. M. Holmes still has some in her possession.

## NO RAILROADS

During this time no railroads existed in this part of Oxford and consequently teaming their products to a city or town was a big responsibility and called for good roads. The Coal Road came into being at this time and was so called because with the impression it would make a good road bed white pine logs were piled about five feet high and covered with earth and fired to produce a charcoal road bed and for years after if you travelled on this road in the dry weather you were badly in need of a bath when you arrived at your destination, "truly as black as coal". Richard Talbot had the contract to build the first plank and gravel road from Delhi to Ingersoll and collected fees at toll gates. Walter Reaveley was the last toll gate keeper. This included the Coal Road.

The great need for railroad was felt for some time and as early as 1850 a movement was under way to obtain one here and finally construction of the Woodstock and Lake Erie Railroad began. By 1954 all the grading, fencing and bridging was completed. The ties were delivered and all was ready for the rails when Mr. Zimmerman, the chief promoter was killed. So died this railroad. Later the bridges were taken down and floated to the match factory to be made into matches. By 1872 another effort was made to obtain a railroad. Through the efforts of J. E. Bullock and Gilbert Moore the Port Dover and Lake Huron Railroad became interested. This railroad eventually took the old survey lines of the Woodstock and Lake Erie Railroad and at last a railroad became a reality but the great days of the white pine forests were over and it did not bring the great benefits that were anticipated, also other railroads had moved into this area and there were 20 stations within a radius of 12 miles of the village. Also with the passing of the lumber trade farming came to the fore and cheesemaking and hog raising were the chief sources of income for the rural area.

## CANADIAN FIRST

In 1879 H. and J. Bullock of Chicago and F. Bullock and W. F. King of Otterville started the Otterville Sweeper Co. making the first carpet sweepers in Canada. Later it was changed to the Otterville Manufacturing Co. and they also made piano stools and ornamental grill work with their products being exported to Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and South America.

In 1870 the Burkholder Bros. who lived two miles east of Otterville invented the steel yard stumping machine and they were manufactured in the village and this machine was in great demand wherever stumps needed pulling. A similar machine to this may be seen at the pioneer village at Doon near Kitchener.

In 1887 the great telephone era began and one of the first lines was from Aylmer to Port Colbourne and before long Norwich and Otterville were connected with it. R. Paxton was the first manager at Otterville. The early phone had no switchboard and it was just one big happy party line and for 19 years there was only one phone in Otterville. An exchange was installed in 1906 with 23 subscribers and by 1913 there were 100 phones in the village. Florence Dunker was one of the first operators. Though the early phone was not popular, the village had several newspapers for conveying the news of the day. In 1876 the Otterville Angus was published weekly. In 1882 the Guide was read weekly and in 1892 the Echo and in 1899 the Herald were monthly sources of information on local events.

## RELIGIOUS GROUPS

Spiritually Otterville was a mecca for many of the religious groups of the day that were banned in other parts of the country. About 1882 the Salvation Army, though being banned in other parts of the country, was able to build a citadel in the village. Today this building still stands and is used as an IOOF hall. The negro slaves congregated here and were made welcome and developed quite a community. They built themselves a church and laid out a cemetery north of the village about 1860. At the season for camp meetings the darkies would gather from all parts of the country, often coming from as far away as Windsor. Some of the families who supported

this church were the Bennetts, Clause, Gowans, Grays, James, Joiner, Martins, Taylor, Wagner, Williams, Osbourne and the Andersons, one of their number, Sam Bennett, at one time was considered to be the strongest man in Ontario. He could, with little effort, lift a 300-lb. barrel of salt off the ground and place it on a wagon. The majority of



these people had strong religious convictions and Jeremiah Wagner, an ex-slave was one of their known ministers. The area which they used for their cemetery is now unmarked and a growth of trees covers the area where many lie buried. In 1830 the first Anglican service was held with Rev. P. Green, a travelling missionary conducting services at the home of John Jones and Henry Powell and in 1864 the first church was built with Rev. Kennedy as the first resident minister.

The first house of worship, though, was east of Otterville where the Society of Friends conducted services. Their cemetery still remains.

The first post office in Otterville was opened about 1830 with John Cornell the first postmaster. This was the third post office to be established in Ingersoll (Oxford) being the first and Norwich was established shortly before Otterville.

In 1839 there was a colored school in the middle townline taught by a Mr. Holingback. It was built at the end of the lane behind Dr. A. J. Collver's house and was considered to be one of the best in the country. In the 1830's Chauncey Wilcox was the teacher.

In 1857 the old two storey school was built. H. N. C. Land was the first teacher, in the upper room and Miss Hattie Stover taught the lower room.

Otterville today is quite proud of its park which offers rest and relaxation from the troubles of the world to all who visit it and there is always a welcome awaiting both old and young within its gates.

#### By ART WILLIAMS

In 1808 the first settlers arrived in the area now known as South Norwich. Along the Spitler Creek between the sixth and eighth concessions. Those taking land were Anthony Sells, Joe Spitler, John Phillips, John Phillips, Jr., and Archie Phillips. Robert Sweet, Joseph Stafford, Seeley Stiles and a man named Barton settled around Otterville. They were followed in the same year by Cook and Galloway who built the first house on the site of Otterville. On the banks of the Otter they built the first grist and sawmill.

Later in 1808 John Gilbert came into the lower settlement as this part of Norwich township was known and cleared an area now known as Springfield. With him came the first horse into the township. There being no meadows of luscious hay to harvest for winter feed, the horse was wintered on browse.

These mills located at Otterville were an asset to the settlers even though the plants were primitive. As there was no way of bolting flour, that is separating the bran and shorts from the flour, the finished product was little more than ground wheat. Later, a bolting cloth was intalled. This was done before an elevator was built and it was necessary to carry the grain from one operation to another. Of this type is the Backus Mill at Long Point.

These people formed an isolated pocket of civilization and until Squire Haley arrived in 1811 no other settlers had joined those already located here. The first child was born in 1809 and named Sarah Gilbert. Miss Brennis Cook was joined in wedlock with Gilbert Harris in 1813 for the first marriage. Harris was from West Oxford.

As in North Norwich, the Quakers were an active religious group. They erected the first meeting house at Erbtown, about a mile west of Otterville and now this forms part of the village. The original school was located on the banks of the Spitler near the seventh concession and the students were taught by John Phillips, jr.

In 1816 the first store was opened at Otterville by William Holmes. It was located on the flats where the bridge crosses the Otter. Prior to this it was necessary to go to Waterford to shop at the store operated there by Job Lodor. Incidentally there was a jail at Long Point but nobody to enforce the law. Judgment was left to the individual to obtain the best way he could. This often meant the use of bare knuckles. Solomon Lossing was appointed justice of the peace in 1829.

The first road that could be called a road was laid out in 1827 and extended from Springfield to the east quarter townline and was known as the eighth concession.

In 1820 the first settlement of Negroes was formed in South Norwich when about 50 escaped slaves took up land two and one half miles north of Springfield. The site is still referred to as "Nigger Hill," it being a slight rise on the railroad right of way. These negroes remained in the township and were always well thought of. They had farms on the sixth, seventh concessions, middle townline at Mill formed a church which was located north of Otterville. Jeremiah Weyner was an outstanding minister. During the summer they would hold camp meetings similar to those held in the southern states. It was not unusual to see as many as a thousand or more in attendance, from places as far away as Chatham and Windsor or from the northern states. The gatherings would be conducted by five or six ministers. Each would be conducting his section of the meeting, and the hat would be passed around to cover his expenses. Themeetings would stretch over two Sundays. Many local whites came to hear the singing of these people. During the time between services they would have ball teams competing against each other. The calibre of their game made their local members much in demand for other township teams.

The last family of these people was the family of Benny Gray who lived at Sommerville. Benny joined the local church after his own was closed and often led in prayer at meetings and at Sunday School while his daughter, Ida, was a much sought after singer. When Benny died in 1930 at the age of 83, she went to Windsor to live.

In 1850 the first election was held for Norwich Township, and in 1855 the township was divided at the sixth concession into North and South Norwich. The first reeve of South Norwich was Asa Durkee with Jesse Cornell, R. B. Cromwell, Chauncey Wilcox and David Randall as councillors. E. M. Schooley was clerk and treasurer. Charles Lewish, John Cooper, Alex McFarlane, Mel Durkee, H. Huggins later served as clerks.

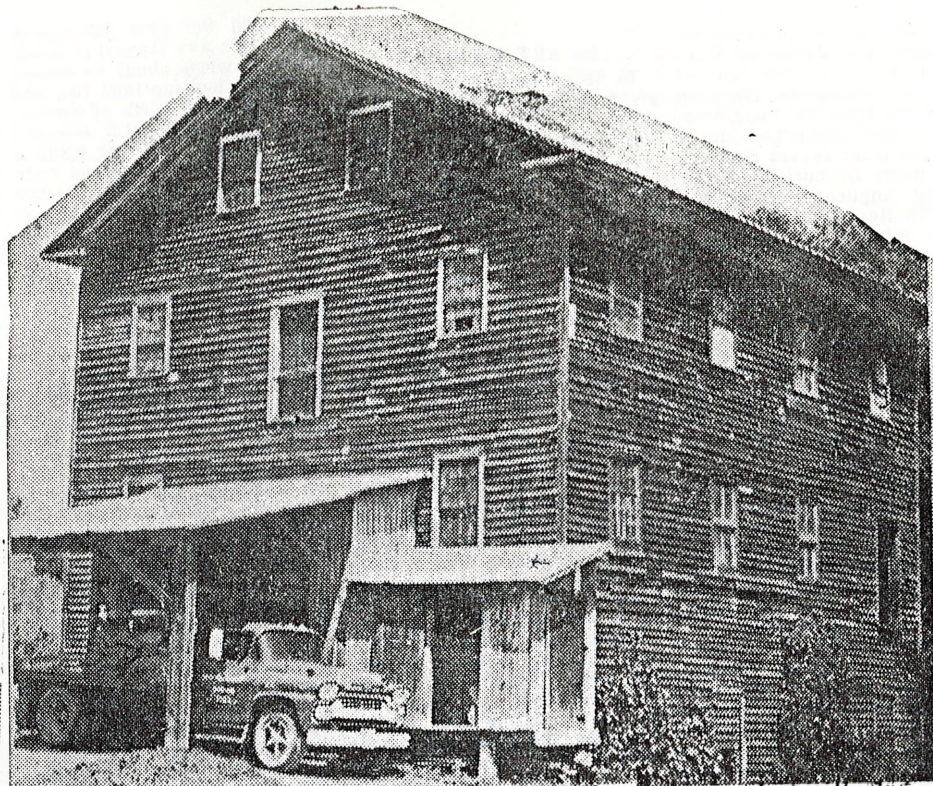
The land of South Norwich being of the same type as that of Tillsonburg and Normandale, an early search for bog iron ore was conducted. In 1831 Peter Hamilton and William Hardy built an iron smelting furnace on the Otter. This venture never really got started due to an accident. Today parts of the furnace and bog iron can be found on the site. This did not stop the iron ore mining and as late as 1896 bog iron was being shipped to Hamilton in carload lots. A new deposit was found on P. C. Addison's farm the same year. This bog iron ore was the only mineral find in Oxford county along these lines but it was never found in quantity and quality to call for large scale mining operations. The best type of ore produced about 33 1-3 percent iron. With the discovery of better type ore and cheaper transportation by water, the

mining industry died a natural death. In recent years much research has been done in this area to try and revive the industry.

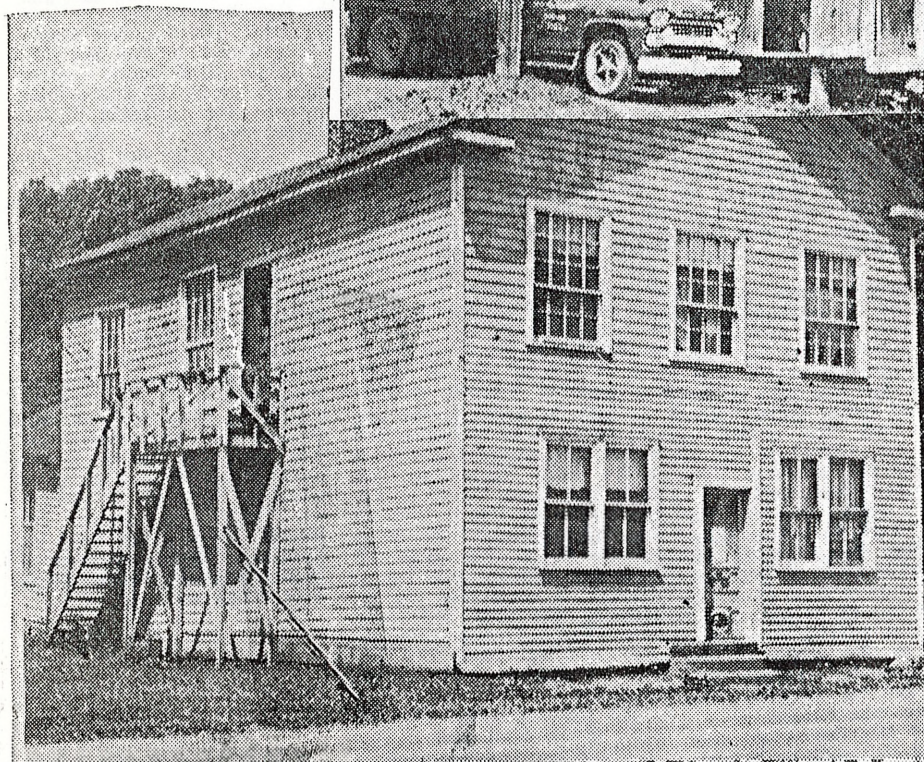
In the earliest days the only way of getting produce to market was over the plank roads to Port Dover, Woodstock or Ingersoll. In 1850 a movement was underway to establish a Woodstock and Lake Erie Railroad passing through South Norwich. In 1854 the chief promoter was killed. With him died, for the time being, a railway link for the township. This being the era of railroad building, the scheme was not forgotten. J. E. Bullock and Gilbert Moore revived the project and a railroad from Port Dover to Lake Huron was completed. The delay was disastrous and by this time most of the pine timber had been removed and other railroads including the Brantford-Tillsonburg lines and the Canadian Southern were in operation. The Canadian Southern proved to be the line with a future as it made contact with the larger centres of both Canada and Northern United States. Today it is the New York Central, the line well known for its fast trains, and is chiefly used to transport freight from Detroit to Buffalo.

In 1865 the Agricultural Society was started with A. B. Moore as president and for 57 years was the fall highlight for the agriculturists of the township. The Otterville fair as it was known was held on the first Friday and Saturday of October. Music was supplied for the event by the Otterville Band which John McFarlane started and was considered one of the best bands at that time. Some of its members included D. Creighton, "Big" and "Little" Mel Durkee, Isaac Cable, John Goodwin, H. Wiltse, Will Durkee, Moses Furlong, Billie Davis, Alex McFarlane.





Grist mill built 1845  
by Edward Bullock and has  
since that time been in con-  
tinuous operation. It is one of  
the few remaining mills in  
Oxford County that still oper-  
ates with water power. (Staff  
Photo)



IN 1837 this building stood  
down town and was known  
as Cromwell's Store. During  
the rebellion a number of  
rebel prisoners were confined  
in it under guard. One of the  
women managed to throw the  
guard's guns in the river and  
the prisoners escaped. In 1879  
the Otter Sweeper Co. made  
the first carpet sweepers in  
Canada in this building. It  
is now located at the railroad  
crossing at the west end of  
the village.



BUILDING GRAND TRUNK BRIDGE NEAR OTTERVILLE ABOUT 1891

SENTINEL REVIEW

July 7, 1962 + January 3, 1963



# Restored Otterville mill opened in park-like setting

By ALISON DOWNIE  
of The Sentinel-Review

OTTERVILLE — It was the social event of the season.

The official opening of the restored Otterville mill Sunday afternoon was attended by hundreds of village and area residents, as well as dignitaries from all levels of government, including Ontario's Lieutenant Governor Lincoln Alexander.

The dark, threatening skies broke open shortly before the opening ceremonies were to begin at 3:30 p.m. forcing members of the crowd to run for cover or huddle under umbrellas. Some resourceful onlookers even used garbage bags to protect themselves from the downpour.

The rain didn't last long. As Alexander's navy blue limousine pulled up in front of the mill the precipitation began to let up. There was another brief shower during the dignitaries'

speeches, then the clouds cleared and the sun began to shine, just in time for the entertainment program and barbecue.

Proud members of the South Norwich Historical Society were complimented and congratulated by all speechmakers for their efforts in restoring the mill.

Among those who spoke were Norwich Township Mayor John Heleniak, Oxford County Warden Helen Smith, Oxford MPP Dick Treleaven, Oxford MP Dr. Bruce Halliday, Marie Avey from the Norwich Local Architectural Conservation Advisory Committee, Ken Mann from the South Norwich Historical Society, Christine Toughton from the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Culture and Doug Layton from the Ontario Historical Society.

In his address to the crowd, Alexander congratulated the village on its 180th birthday, which is also being celebrated this year. The

lieutenant governor was impressed with the "magnificent" turnout and said he glad to be back in Oxford County. There comes a time when you have to take stock of things and decide if old buildings are worth saving, Alexander told his dampened audience, "I compliment the (South Norwich) historical society for saying yes."

In closing, Alexander urged everyone on hand, "To make sure our heritage is never lost."

The restoration of the mill is a giant feather in the cap of the historical society. Members of the society were responsible for convincing township and provincial government officials that it was worth spending money to save the mill.

The mill was in continuous operation until 1980 when the Treffy family decided it would not be feasible to convert it over to the metric

system. The mill and property in the heart of the village were put up for sale. Because of the significant history and architectural value of the mill the historical society got involved and convinced Norwich Township Council to put up the \$60,000 required to purchase the old building and property. The deal closed in October 1981.

The following spring, the township passed a bylaw designating the mill as being of architectural and historical value.

The mill was built by Edward Bullock as a grist and flour mill. It is believed to be the oldest continuously operated wheel-powered mill in Ontario. The original owners were responsible for much of the early commerce of Otterville over a period of 55 years.

The historical society began restoring the mill in 1983 after signing a 10-year lease agreement with the township agreeing to maintain the building and property as funds became

available.

Restoration work began shortly after the agreement was signed with financial help from the provincial government. Firstly, the building was raised to put in a new foundation. Two logging bees were held at a local farm, and the pine logs were used for lumber to put new siding on the mill. A total of 33 windows, made to represent the originals, were installed using some of the original panes. The water wheel was also restored. The mill was equipped with a burglar alarm and a new electrical system. The final work was completed last year when the metal roof was removed and replaced with cedar shingles.

Once the hub of activity in the village, the mill is once again a place where people can gather. Only now it will be in an idyllic, park-like setting.



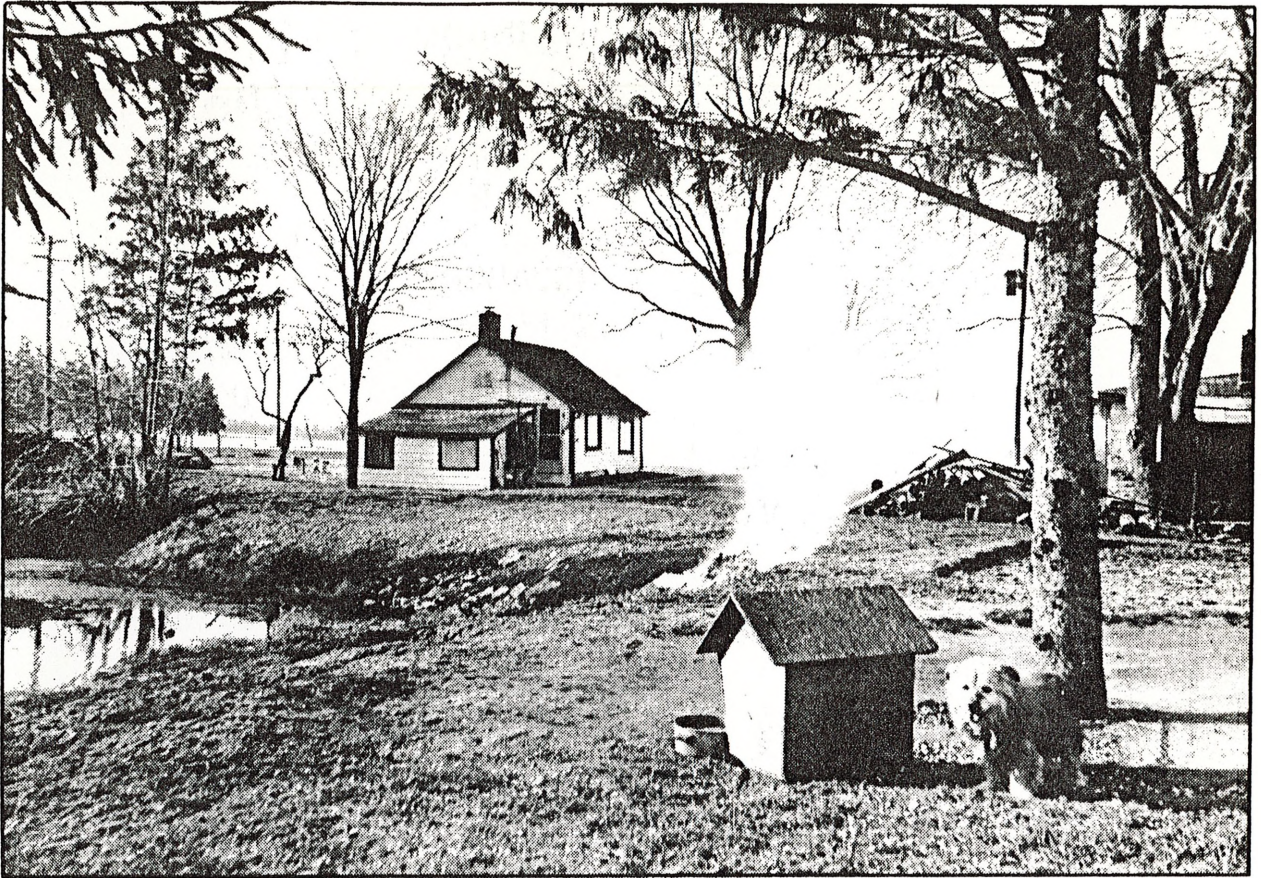
Throngs of people turned out for the official opening of the restored Otterville Mill on Sunday afternoon. Ontario Lieutenant Governor Lincoln Alexander, inset left, discusses the

mill with other dignitaries at the ceremony. After a couple of rain showers, the skies cleared just in time for the entertainment program and barbecue.

SENTINEL  
REVIEW

June 29, 1987





## OXFORD'S GHOST TOWNS

During recent months, as *Sentinel-Review* photographer Ted Town went about his regular assignments, he's been gathering photos of the vanished settlements that are the ghost towns of Oxford County. Another is Poverty Point: located in North Norwich Township at the intersection of Slant Road and Concession Two, this crossroads was referred to disparagingly in "The Amelia Poldon History of the Norwiches," written around the turn of the cen-

tury, as Poverty Point. Hardly surprisingly, no post office was ever developed here. In a later entry, however, the writer changed her tune. By that time a cheese factory and a Sunday school had sprung up. The area was now known as Prosperity Point, and the writer referred to it as "a rural section containing a bright, clever and enthusiastic lot of young people, who are full of energy and make things tell."

SENTINEL REVIEW

May 11, 1988





## OXFORD'S GHOST TOWNS

During recent months, as *Sentinel-Review* photographer Ted Town went about his regular assignments, he's been gathering photos of the vanished settlements that are the ghost towns of Oxford County. Another is Rosanna: located in South Norwich Township on County Road 37, there is some confusion over the name. When the post office was established here in 1895, the

postmaster selected the name Rosehill. For some reason, the Post Office Department interpreted that as Rosanna. Only a cemetery stands today to mark the location.

W.J. Wintemberg, reprinted from the Ontario Historical Society's *Papers and Records*, Volume XXII, 1925.

SENTINEL REVIEW

May 9, 1988





## OXFORD'S GHOST TOWNS

During recent months, as *Sentinel-Review* photographer Ted Town went about his regular assignments, he's been gathering photos of the vanished settlements that are the ghost towns of Oxford County. Another is Summerville: located in South Norwich Township, Summer-

ville was referred to in "The Amelia Poldon History of the Norwiches" as "a wide-awake, enthusiastic rural section" with a church and a cheese factory. All that remains of the site on Highway 59 today is the cemetery.

SENTINEL REVIEW

May 4, 1988