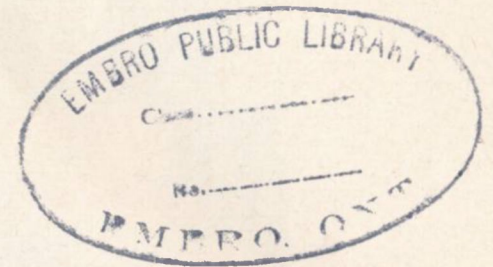


Otterville-South Norwich

Sesquicentennial

1807 - 1957



FOREWORD

This booklet has been compiled as a representative account of the history of the Township of South Norwich and its communities.

We are deeply indebted to those who have written the previous histories, for upon these this book was built, supplemented by the invaluable memories of our elder citizens.

We are also most grateful to all others who have given their time and loaned pictures.

Township of South Norwich

In 1920 the Uren Prehistoric Village was uncovered on Lot 8, Concession 7, of South Norwich Township and from this find and exploration of neighbouring farms along the Otter Creek, knowledge of the Neutral Indians who lived here centuries ago, was gained. From the relics uncovered it is believed that these early inhabitants were home keeping, industrious, fairly well clothed and fed, gay at times, warriors when necessary, capable of cruelty, and showing some initiative, perseverance and love of beauty.

These Neutral Indians were wiped out in 1652 by the Iroquois, who were the inhabitants of the white pine forests of Norwich Township at the time of European settlement at the turn of the 19th century. What a contrast can be visualized when one thinks of the settlers travelling through the forests along blazed trails travelled by Indians and wild animals, instead of modern highways.

In 1799, William Hambly, a deputy surveyor, began to survey Norwich Township, laying it out in lines, concessions and 200-acre lots by blazing trees and placing stakes. At this time it was a portion of Norfolk County, but in 1800 it became a part of Oxford.

On July 22, 1800, Mr. William Wilcocks of York, grandfather of Robert Baldwin, received from the Crown a grant of 15,000 acres lying east of the middle town line and from the 1st and 12th Concessions one mile in width.

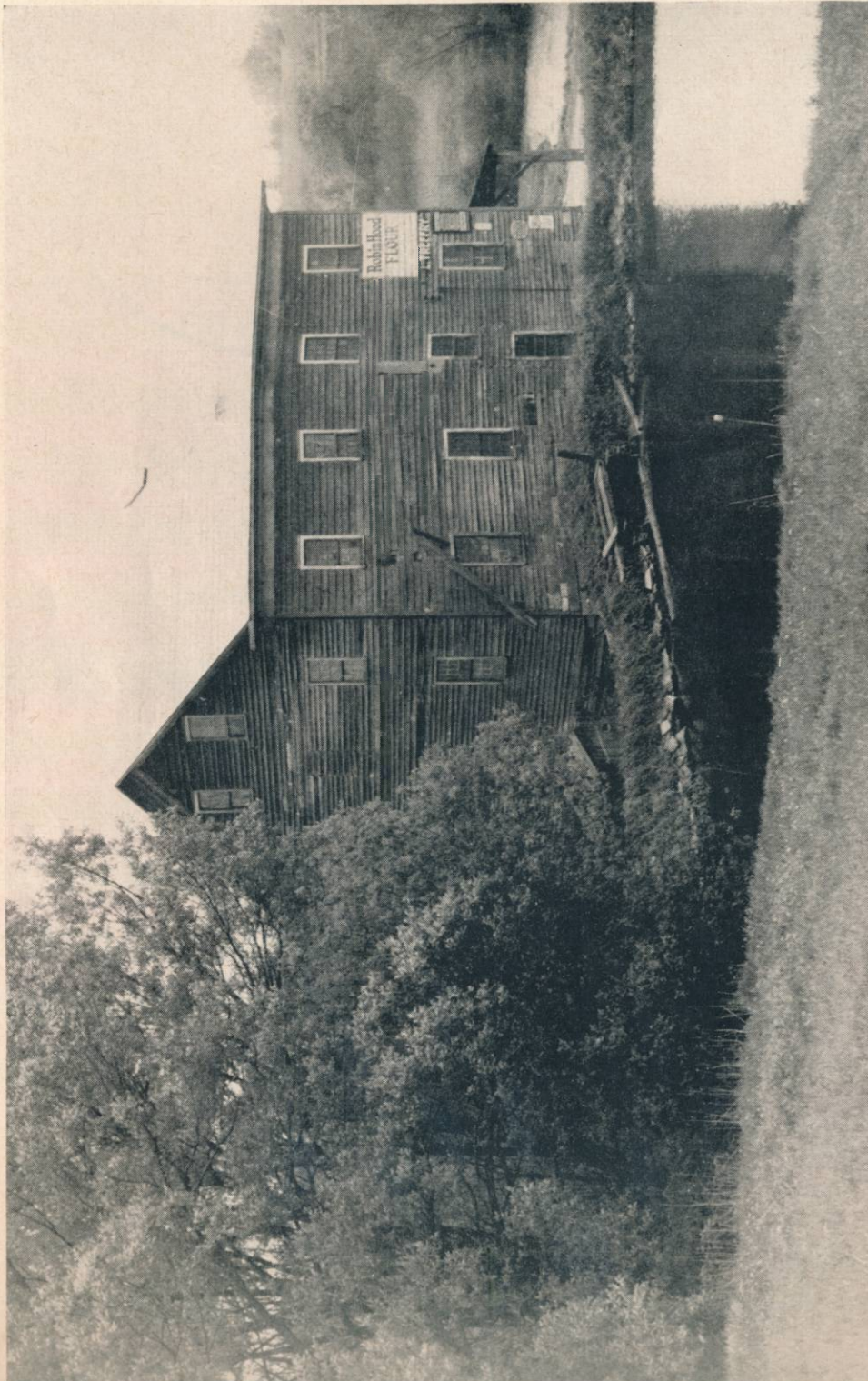
In 1808, Josiah Gilbert brought the first horse to the region. By 1811 there were eleven families in the Township and 5,200 acres of land had been taken up. In the first season 32 acres of land had been put into crop and in the second season 735 acres. In 1817 the population was 170. By 1820 there was a surplus of wheat which had to be teamed 60 miles to Ancaster—a journey of three days.

In 1850 the first election of the Township of Norwich was held in Norwich with Gerry De Long as reeve and councillors John Griffin, Michael Stover, Truman Wilcox and Asa Durkee. Truman Wilcox was reeve in 1851 and Benjamin Holmes replaced De Long. In 1852 Asa Durkee was reeve.

In 1855, Norwich Township was divided into North and South Norwich—the 6th Concession being the boundary line.

In 1856 the first reeve of South Norwich was Asa Durkee, with Councillors Jesse Cornell, R. B. Cromwell, Chauncey Wilcox and David Randall. E. M. Schooley was clerk and treasurer.

Grist mill at Otterville, built in 1845 by Edward Bullock, one of the many which played an important part in the history of South Norwich Township.





Town Hall

In 1864, Otterville Town Hall was built by the Sons of Temperance. The Dramatic Club, with the help of the town, moved it from near where the Baptist Church now stands to the present site, put an addition at the back and bricked it up.



1882—Hall Curtain

In 1882 a drop curtain was painted by Tom Dearle depicting the Main Street of Otterville.

The hall was remodelled in the 1920's and in 1939 was completely remodelled, removing the gallery to enlarge the dance floor and excavating the basement to build the Library, Clerk's Office, council rooms, banquet hall and kitchen.

PARK

About the turn of the century Robert Paxton was instrumental in applying for a charter and started the Otter Park Company, selling 1,000 shares at \$1.00 each. The money was used to clear an acre of land and build a footbridge across the Otter River. Later 10 acres were added.



First Footbridge to Park

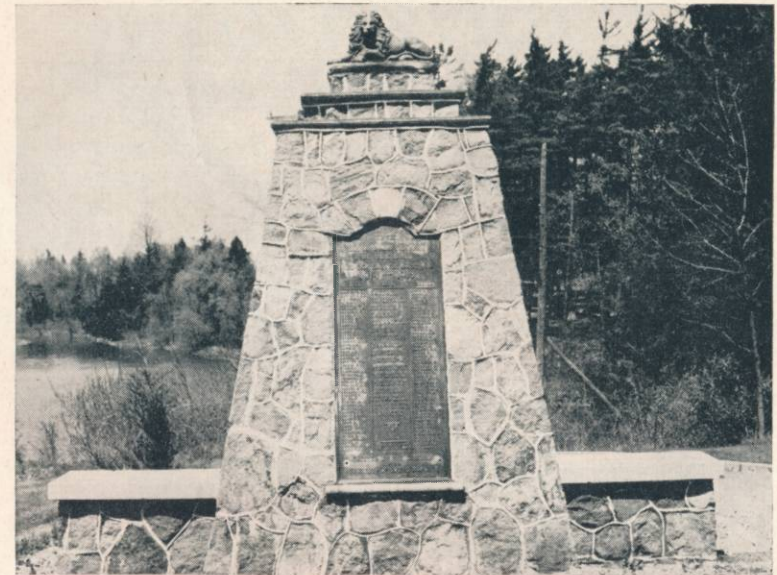
About 1920, due to the necessity of building a new bridge, the Otter Park Company handed the park over to the Park Board, which also governed the South Norwich Community Hall, with J. R. Johnson as first president. Upon receiving a grant from the Government, the hall was remodelled and the new bridge built. Shortly afterwards booths, kitchen, bathing house and dance pavilion were built.



Second Bridge with Bathing Pavilion



In 1907 to commemorate the centenary the cannon which was made about 1807 was presented by the Federal Government.



In 1932 a memorial to the boys of the First World War was built at the entrance to the Park..

Cement Tennis Courts were built and in 1940 the ball diamond was given floodlights.



July 1, 1949, brought the opening of the South Norwich Memorial Swimming Pool as a memorial of World War II, making the park the popular picnic spot of the countryside.

OTTERVILLE

In 1807 John Earl and Paul Avery received a grant of land from the government, where they erected a grist and saw mill just a little above the present dam. They started a succession of owners of this mill and others—Cook and Galloway, Cromwell, Ferrie, and in 1845, Edward Bullock.

In 1819, John Jones arrived from New York State to take up a grant of land where Charter Davis' farm is at present, and family names such as Cromwell, Cornell, Addison, Vanbuskert and Johnston were now familiar.

The first store in South Norwich was opened in 1816 in Otterville on the flat south of the bridge with William Holmes as proprietor, and in 1830 John Cornell started the first post office in the town. In the same year Asahel Oatman built the first tavern of logs. It was kept by Stephen Yarrington and occupied a site where the Cleveland House later stood.

In 1833 there was a second hotel kept by a Mr. Flander. It stood where Wardell's store now stands. Later there was the Cleveland House where the feed store stands and the Bedford House where the Revere House was later situated.



In 1831, Peter Hamilton and William Hardy built an iron smelting furnace at Ball's farm on the banks of the Otter. An accident halted this enterprise but even yet stone furnace blocks can be found there and bog-rusty iron can be dug up where it was piled awaiting the furnace.



Asa Durkee's Harness Shop

In 1833, Asa Durkee built a tannery and shoe and harness business, and in 1834 Peter Wyatt took up residence across the river from him.

In 1854, David Stage built a foundry—one of the products being the bell on the school. About this time the Erbs built saw and woollen mills.

Between 1850 and 1860 in and around Otterville were no less than 12 steam and 14 water mills, all cutting lumber, and nearly as many more making shingles. Until 1870 the lumbering of the white pine was one of the principal industries.

Names of some of the businesses in effect during this time were W. and A. Parsons Carriage Works—begun in 1859; John Furlong Shingle and Cooperage Factory—1855; J. J. Warner Match Factory—1863—among the first to make sulphur matches; Shaw & Pennington—1872—manufacturers of doors and sash.

In the 1870's the Burkholder Bros.—Charles and Christopher—who lived two miles east of Otterville, invented the Steelyard Stumping Machine which was used all over the country. These were made in a blacksmith shop there.





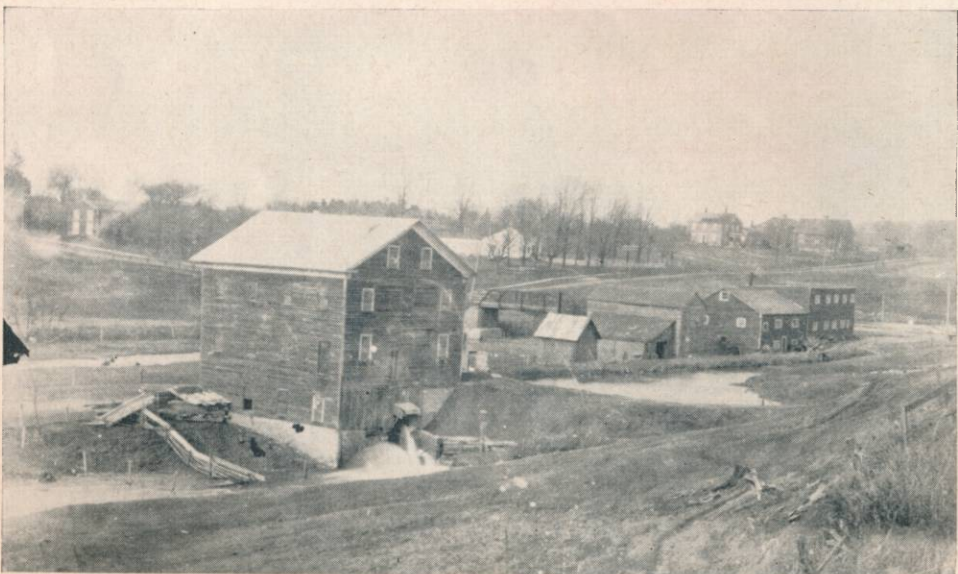
Lossing Mills—1880

In 1877 the mills at Otterville passed into the hands of E. M. Schooley and in 1880 S. B. Lossing became owner. At this time there was a saw mill at the west end of the dam and a woollen mill at the east end. These were connected by a footbridge.

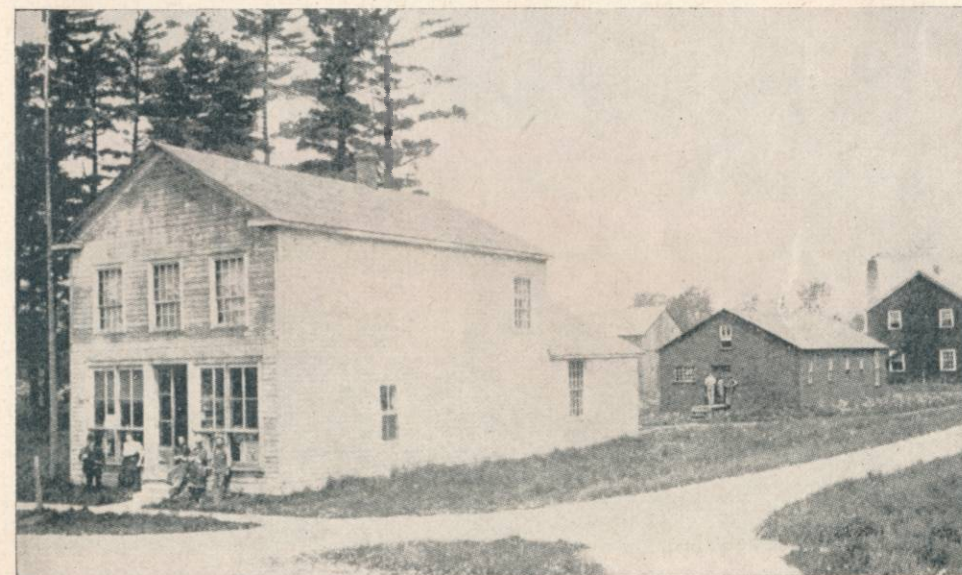


Present Dam

In 1879, H. E. and J. E. Bullock of Chicago and W. F. Kay started the Otter Sweeper Company, making the first sweepers in Canada. Later the name was changed to the Otterville Mfg. Co. They made piano stools, ornamental grill work and other goods known throughout Canada and abroad.



Present Otterville Mill—Early 1900's, and Casket Factory.

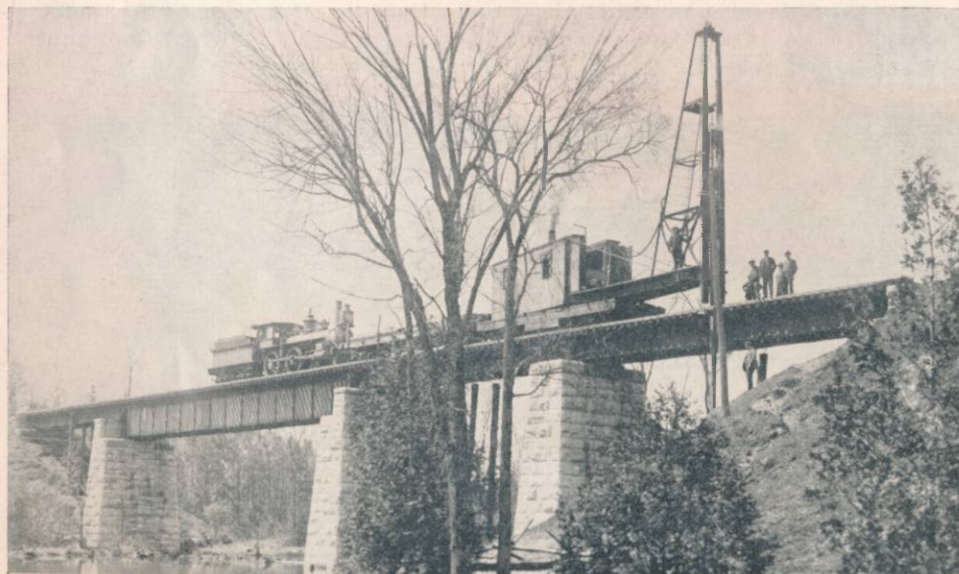


Otterville Mfg. Co.

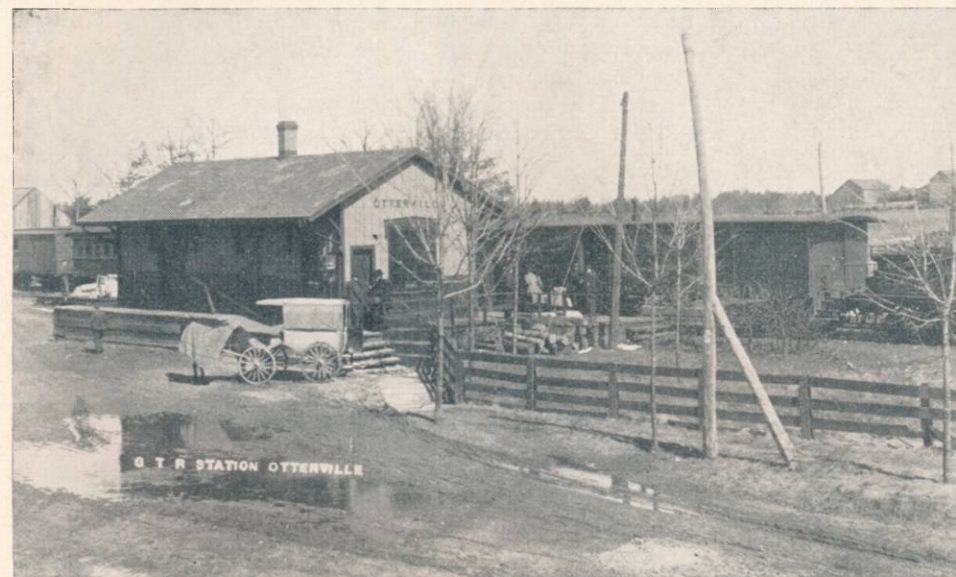
This building stood downtown as Cromwell's store and in 1837 a number of rebel prisoners were confined in it under guard. One of the women managed to throw the guards' guns in the river and the prisoners escaped.

The western end of Otterville was known as Erbtown, named after Samuel Erb, who owned both a saw mill and a woollen mill. There were quite a number of houses and two churches—Methodist and Quaker—with cemeteries.

In the earliest days the nearest market was Ancaster, 60 miles away, but even in the 1850's all products had to be teamed to Port Dover, Woodstock and Ingersoll. However, work was started on the Woodstock and Lake Erie railroad and nearly completed when in 1854 the chief promoter was killed and the work abandoned. Finally through the efforts of J. E. Bullock and Gilbert Moore of Norwich, construction was taken up again and the railway from Port Dover to Lake Huron completed. By this time most of the pine timber was cut and several other railroads were near the village, including the Brantford-Tillsonburg R.R. and the Canadian Southern now the Michigan Central—passengers boarded at Cornell.

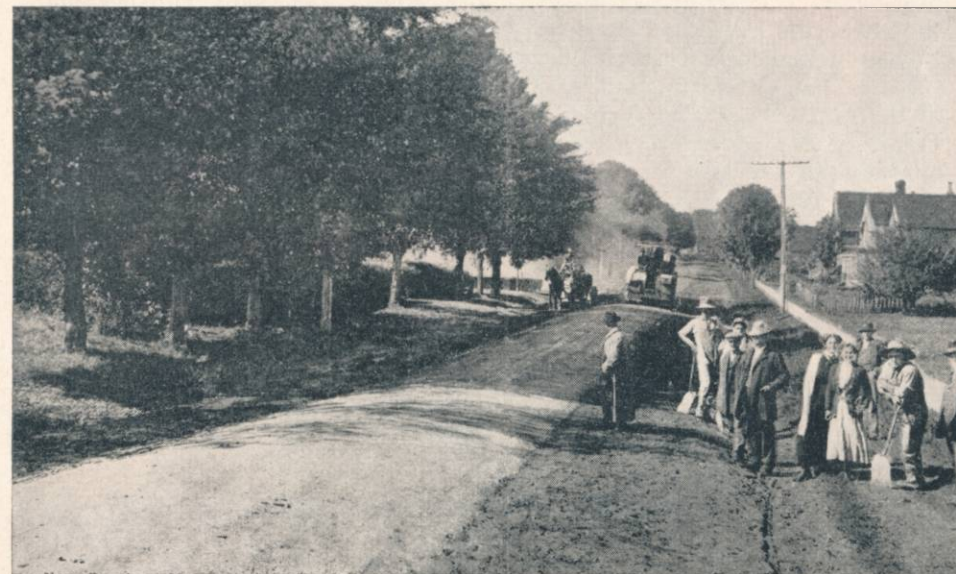


Building Present Railroad Bridge About 1892



Station in the Days of Matthew Furlong's Bus

The first concession road opened in the Township was the 8th, which in 1827 stretched from Springford to the East Quarter Town Line. Previous to this the only roads were crooked paths meandering from one neighbourhood to another.



Paving Main Street

Richard Talbot had a contract and built the first road of plank from Delhi to Ingersoll, collecting fees at toll gates. The last of these was kept by Walter Reavely on the Coal Road. The Coal Road, a section of the Delhi-Ingersoll road, was so named because logs were piled up, covered with earth and fired to produce a charcoal roadbed.



Otterville Fair

In 1865 the Agricultural Society was started with A. B. Moore as president. For a number of years it was very successful and became the Otterville Fair, held the first Friday and Saturday of each October. It was looked forward to from year to year as we look forward to the C.N.E. The Otterville Band, started by John McFarlane, Sr., was one of the best around and furnished the music for the day. Music in the Palace was provided by several musicians playing on the organs exhibited. In 1922 the last fair was held and later the ground was sold to J. R. Johnson. From the old buildings the pavilion in the Community Park was erected in 1924.



Otterville Band—1870

Back row : 1, Dave Creighton ; 2, "Big Mel" Durkee ; 3, Isaac Cable ; 4, John Goodwin.

Front row : 1, Henry Wiltse (drummer) ; 2, Will Durkee ; 3, Moses Furlong ; 4, Billie Davis ; 5, Alex. McFarlane ; 6, Melbourne "Little Mel" Durkee.



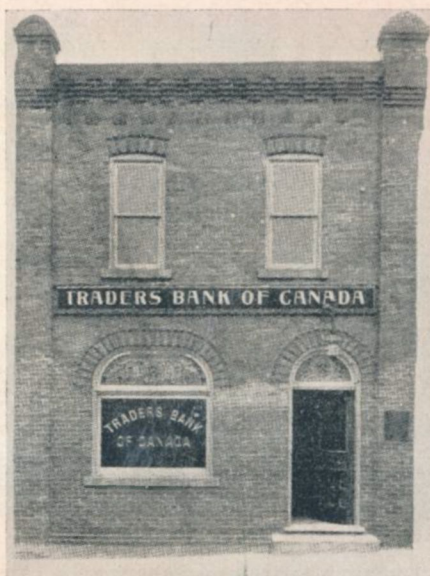
Old Water Tower

In 1913 the first water system was started. In 1948 these were abandoned and a new tower built on Mill Street.



Paxton's Bank

In 1879, Mr. Robert Paxton opened the first bank—a private one—and a post office. Later the Trader's Bank was opened in the present post office building. In 1912 the Trader's Bank joined the Royal Bank of Canada and moved to the Paxton building.



Trader's Bank



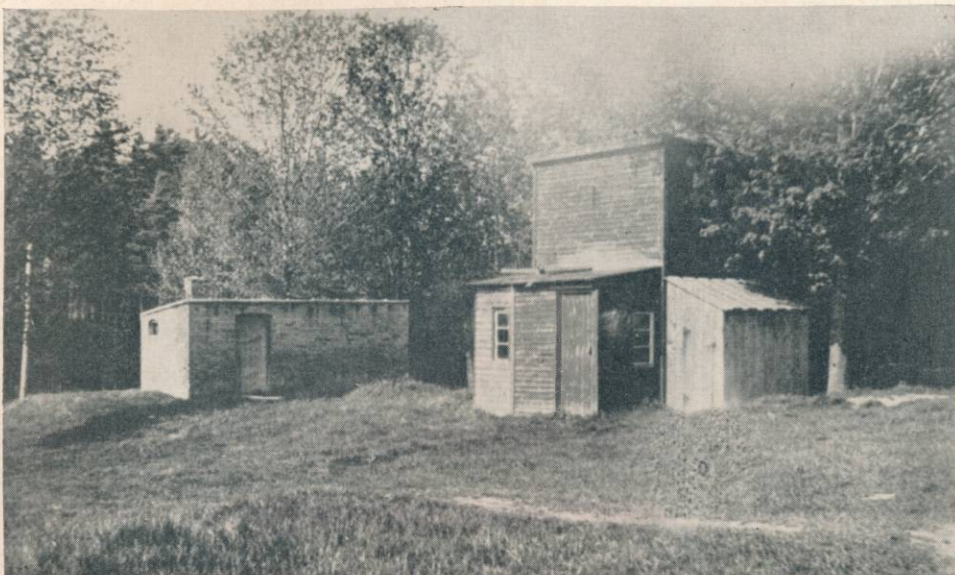
Odd Fellows Hall

Formerly the Salvation Army Hall at the time the Salvation Army was banned from the rest of the County.



Old Fire Hall

Shortly before 1880 a fire hall was built immediately west of the Community Hall. Its bell was cast in 1876 by the Jones Foundry of Troy, N.Y., and rung faithfully for more than 60 years by Mrs. Ruth Elliott until the ringing as a time signal was dispensed with June 4, 1941. In 1941 the present fire hall was built on the corner of Mill and Dover Streets.



Jail and Acetylene Plant

At one time part of the village was lighted by an acetylene plant. Hydro was installed in 1916.

The jail or "cooler" was in use before 1880 and consisted of two cells about 5'x6' and a larger room. It served its purpose until about 1908, when a large energetic occupant kicked the brick wall out and fled.



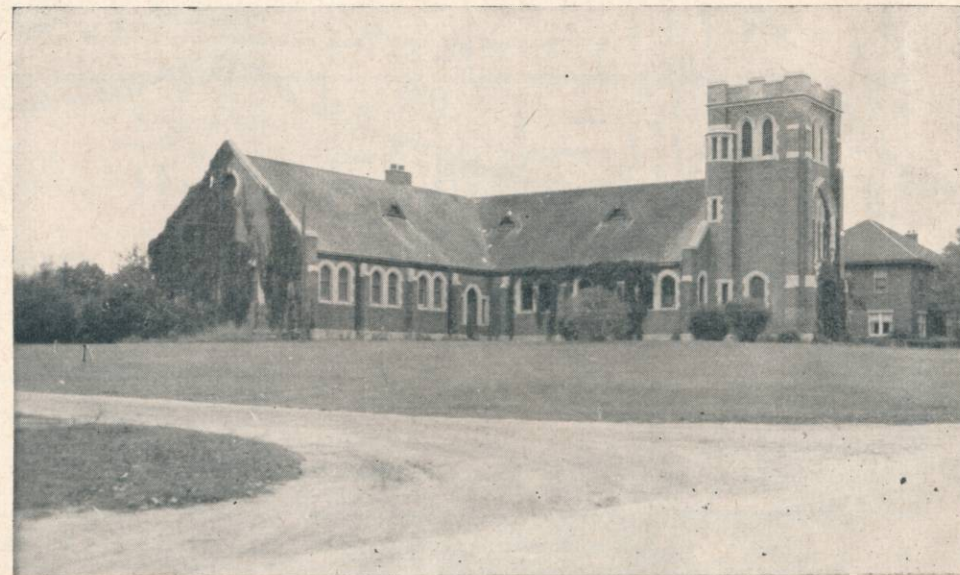
CHURCHES

The first church in Otterville was built in 1843 in Erbtown. It was a Quaker Church. There was also a Methodist Church west of the Quaker Church, built by Mr. Samuel Erb. In 1862 the coloured church was built north west of the old Anglican Church.



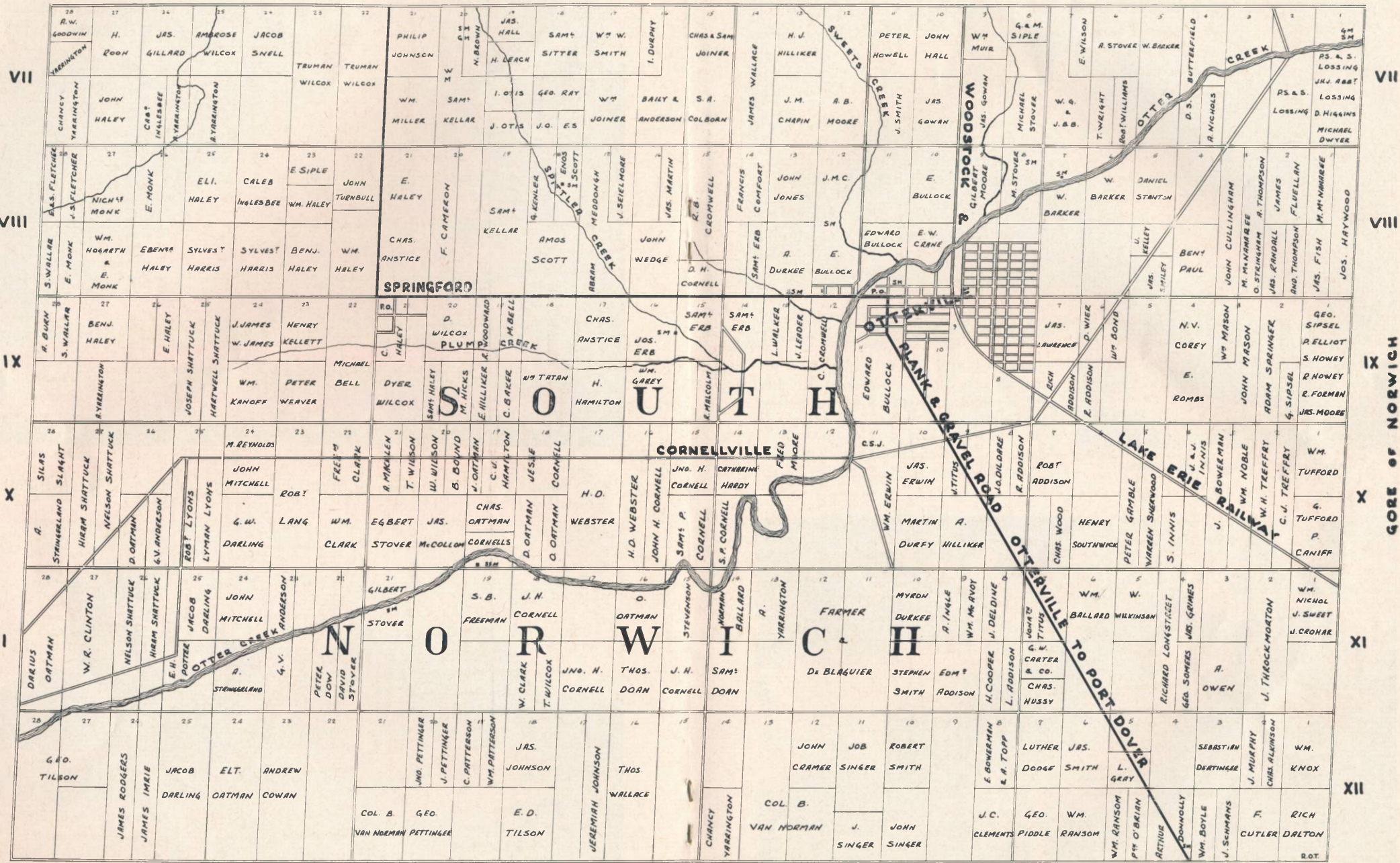
Old St. John's Anglican Church

About 1854 St. John's Anglican Church was built on a piece of land given by Edward Bullock—part of the present cemetery.



Present St. John's Anglican Church

NORTH NORWICH



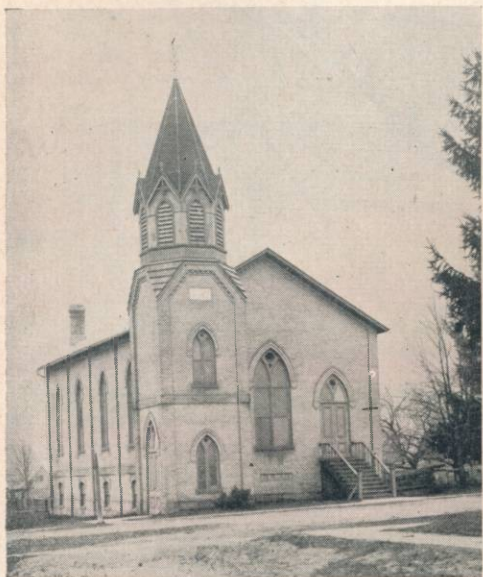
SCALE

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NORFOLK COUNTY

REFERENCE - TREMAINE'S MAP OF OXFORD COUNTY - CANADA WEST - 1857

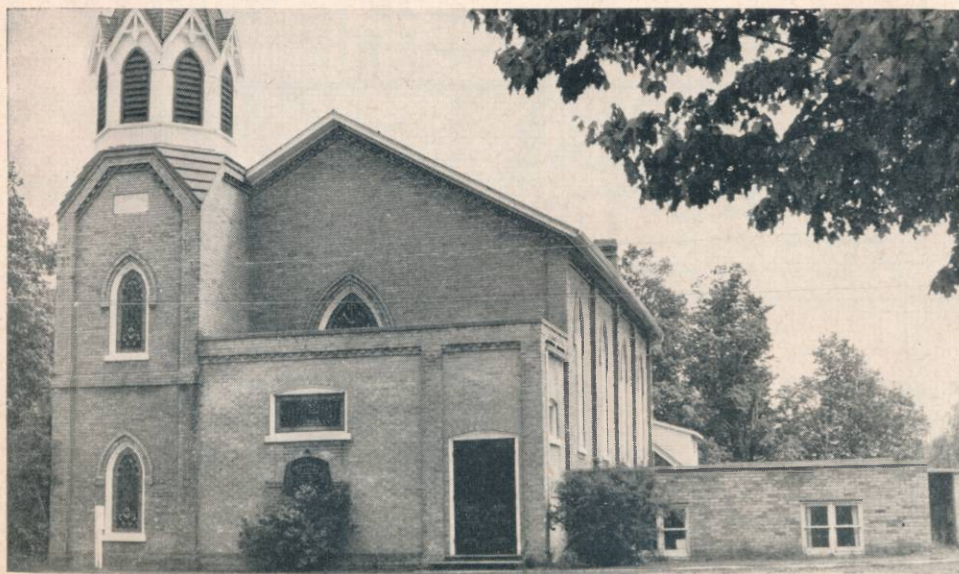
In 1915 Henry Bullock donated some \$20,000 for the building of the present Anglican Church, parish hall and rectory as a memorial to his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Edward Bullock. The rectory was later sold.



Methodist Church Before 1918

In 1862 the Otterville New Connexion Methodist Church was built across from the present Baptist Church by a man named Wilkinson. The Wesleyan Methodists met in the Baptist Church. After the union of these two Methodist groups the frame church was moved over where it now stands, bricked and the basement built—1884.

In 1918 it was completely renovated and the outside steps enclosed. In 1955 a modern kitchen and addition to the Sunday School were added.



Present United Church



Baptist Church

In the spring of 1858 Rev. William Haviland of Burgessville came to Otterville and held meetings in the Town Hall for some time and then organized the Baptist Church with Stephen De Long and Silas Slaght as deacons and Edward Titus as church clerk. The present church was built in 1865 and was later rebricked.

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SCHOOLS

In 1831 there was a coloured school in the middle town line taught by a Mr. Holingback.

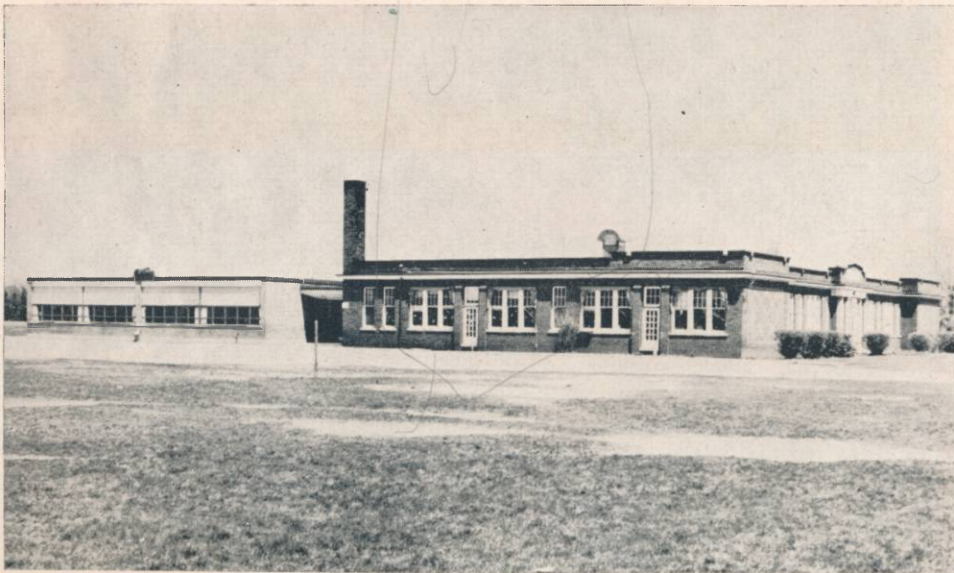
The first school in Otterville was built at the end of the lane behind Dr. A. J. Collver's house and was considered one of the best in the county in the 1830's. Chauncey Wilcox was one of the teachers.

In 1857 the old two storey school was built on the property now owned by Mrs. George Slaght. H. N. Courtland was the first teacher in the upper room and Miss Hattie Stover in the lower room. The continuation school was opened in 1924.



1857 School

In 1927 the present school was built—a continuation and public school. In 1947 it was made into a central public school with six of the smaller schools in the Township closing and the pupils being brought into the central school by bus. In 1952 the new addition of four rooms was made. Secondary school education for the Township pupils is given at Delhi, Norwich and Tillsonburg.



Present School

INDUSTRIES SINCE 1900

The Hyslop Bros. of Greensville built the canning factory in 1925. In 1935 a greater portion of the buildings was ruined by fire. Immediate rebuilding was begun on a much larger scale. The plant covers about 20 acres and employs from 150-200 men and women in the canning season.



Tip Top Canners Ltd.

About 1916 George Williams started the Tred-Rite Shoe Co. in Otterville in the old casket factory just north of the present grist mill. In 1918 the factory burned. A new factory was built in the east end of town and is now in the possession of the canning factory.

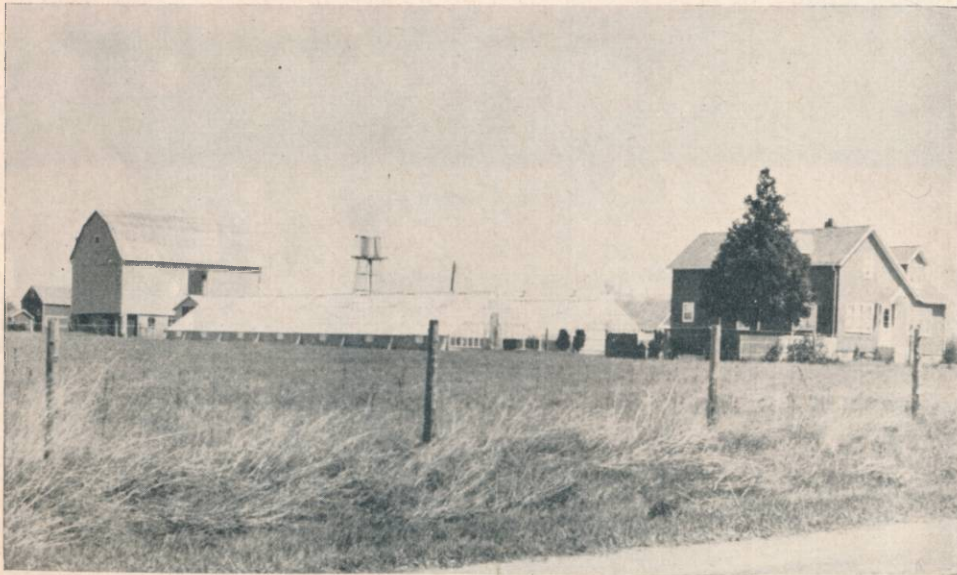
In 1928 the first farms were converted to the growing of tobacco—the beginning of a new and prosperous industry for the people of South Norwich.

E. S. Moore, Otterville, has approached yet another facet of the tobacco industry. Over the past 17 years Mr. Moore, as a registered tobacco seed producer, has shipped his seed all over the world—Central and South America, Africa, Palestine, Malaya, and Southern Ireland.



Early Greenhouses

In 1952 R. P. Pettigrew started production of the Savoil Curing System, consisting of a combustion chamber and a dozen distribution pipes which carry hot air to every point in the kilns. The unit includes thermostatic controls and a photo electric cell to limit the temperature range.



Local Tobacco Farm

MAIN STREET—1904



Scriven's Plumbing and J. W. Fish's Store

Mr. J. Wesley Fish has printed the Voters' List of South Norwich Township for the past 69 years, believed to be an Ontario record.



Downing's Drug Store

MAIN STREET—1957



Main Street—Downtown



SUMMERVILLE

Among early settlers were the Sherwoods who were farming here in 1820, the Treffrys who came from England in 1834, Addisons and Titus'.

In early days Summerville was called Sherwood Settlement. A school teacher, Miss Carrie Robertson, thought Summerville an appropriate name for such a pleasant spot and the name was changed.

Rev. Robert Addison of Niagara received 6,000 acres from the Government—160 of which were given to a cousin, Robert Addison. For many years Addisons farmed much of the land along 59 Highway from the 8th to the 12th Concessions.



Summerville School

The village centred around the junction of the present No. 59 Highway and the 10th Concession. The early school was on the Titus farm on the north east corner. In 1872 a meeting was called by the school trustees, W. Carlyle, Peter Wyatt and Wm. Treffry, to value the site of a new school. The property was bought from C. Hussey for the sum of \$65.00 per acre and a new brick school was built south of the Michigan Central Railway.

There were two churches—both Methodist—one on the south west corner of the 10th Concession and the Coal Road and the other on the north east corner of Highway 59 and the 10th Concession. A saw mill and cheese factory were located on the south east corner and a hotel was across the road from the saw mill on the lot where the two roads come to a point.

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CORNELL



L. Hicks Store and Post Office
Near the 9th Concession and Middle Town Line

Between 1850 and 1860 in and around Cornell there were no less than 20 steam and 14 water mills sawing out the fine pine lumber.

About 1855 John and Samuel Cornell settled here—John on the Arthur Pearce and Samuel on the Ira Pearce farms. These were later marked out in village lots under the name of Cornell.

These two brothers built a large store, a warehouse and a pork packing factory on the south east corner of the Arthur Pearce farm.

For many years Cornell was the centre for the grain, egg and pork market for miles around. Wagons were sent by the Cornells to gather eggs as far west as St. Thomas and as far east as Port Dover. Farmers teamed grain and produce in and the markets reached as far as New York and the large cities of the eastern United States. Wagon trains to Woodstock and Brantford were a common sight.

The population of Cornell grew and a blacksmith shop and a carriage shop were set up. Cornell railroad station stood for many years on the farm now owned by Jesse Gray.

Cornell was a bustling place which stretched for $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles along the Canada Southern Railroad, including two hotels, a school and two churches.

But misfortune overtook the busy village—a store, which served as a bank, was robbed and a few years later was burned, along with the pork factory. As most of the lumber had been cut the saw mills moved on, the Messiah Church and Dennis Hicks hotel were moved to Tillsonburg and Cornell gradually turned back to agriculture.

ROCK'S MILLS



Present Mill

In 1826 David Stover came to the 11th Concession south of Springford. In September, 1854, he received his Crown deed for 100 acres of land for the east half of Lot 22, Concession 11, for which he paid 100 pounds.

Assisted by his father, Gilbert Stover, David built the first dam and saw and grist mills. He also built the house occupied by John Rock in later years.

In 1857 Adam Spencer purchased the mill from David Stover and the community was known as Spencerville. Upon his death in 1889 John Rock and his wife, Phoebe Spencer, took it over and the mill has remained in the Rock family since.



Dam at Rock's Mills

MILDALE



The Red Mill

Among the early pioneers in Milldale was William Potter Barker, who came in 1822 from the States. In 1877 he gave the white frame Quaker Church to the Friends' Society. His son, James Barker, father of Dr. Llewellyn Barker, one-time head of the Department of Medicine, John Hopkins University, was the first minister. William P. Barker also pioneered the Red Mill and the saw mill.

N. B. Bowman came in 1838 and operated the mills under the trade name of Eureka Mills. It was operated in 1887 by Chris Beaton and later by Hawk, McLean and Carlyle, Miller, Palmer, Duncan McNaughton and John Bowerman. High water wrecked the wooden dam in the spring of 1916 and the mill was then torn down.

Teddy Watkins operated the saw mill, cider mill and pump factory at the turn of the 20th century until about 1914.

There was also a blacksmith shop, general store and school.

In 1874 Thomas Wright settled in the village and did ornamental woodwork and carpentry, and made wagon and carriage hubs and spokes and spinning wheels.

The Robert Williams family was a highly respected, musical, coloured family. The father, Robert Williams, was brought from New York State by Ephraim Stover and William Barker. He worked and saved to buy his wife and children out of slavery and brought them here later.

Other early family names included Sifle, Gowan, Sutton and Treffry.



The Old Dam

HAWTREY

In the 1800's Hawtreys was a thriving village. George Southwick, who farmed on the 11th Concession, moved to Hawtreys in 1843 and operated a saw mill, shingle factory and planing mill. A few years later he built two stores, a frame one by the Michigan Central Railway tracks which later burned, and a red brick one which still stands. In the 1890's the brick store was sold to Samuel and Harvey Innis. The store was in the Innis' name for around 20 years and in 1916 Harvey Boyce bought it and the present owner, J. F. Beck, bought him out in 1918.

The physician, Dr. Carder, came to Hawtreys in 1835. John Seatter, who came from the Orkney Islands in 1873, owned the drug store situated on the corner of the sideroad and the 10th Concession.

George Southwick also built a public hall where gospel meetings were held.

There were two hotels, one built near the Michigan Central Railway tracks by John Armstrong and later sold to Bert May, the other on the north east corner of the 10th Concession owned by Henry Southwick.



Sam Innis' Store—Now J. F. Beck



School

The post office and general store combined, south of the brick store and operated by Charles Treffry, burned in the 1890's and the post office was moved over to the brick store and Samuel Innis became postmaster.

There were two blacksmith shops, one on the 10th Concession and the other south of the brick store, operated by Tom and John Clark.

A frame school which was situated on the south east corner of the 10th Concession burned in 1903 and a red brick one was built. In 1943 the school section joined with the consolidated school at Otterville and the brick school was closed.

The United Brethren held tent meetings near the old school and they were so successful that a gospel hall was built. The most interested members were Longstreets, Treffrys, Innis, Hobbs and Andersons. Finally the members drifted away to other churches.

Supplies and mail came into Hawtrey by the Grand Trunk Railway and Michigan Central Railway, and the farmers shipped their milk to Toronto on the G. T. R. In 1932 the Grand Trunk sold to the C. N. R. and trains ceased to come.

By 1930 the dairy farms began to give way to tobacco farming and this is now the chief cultivated crop in Hawtrey.

SPRINGFORD



Main Street at the Turn of the Century

The earliest known settlers around Springford were Joseph Spitzer, John Philips and Fox, whose homes were along the banks of Spitzer Creek, according to a map of 1820. John Philips owned Lot 21 of the 8th Concession.

In 1808 Josiah Gilbert made the first clearing in the neighbourhood known as Springford. He paid \$1.25 an acre for his land. His second daughter, Sarah, was the first white child born in the Township. Mrs. Gilbert used to take grain to Long Point on horseback to have it ground into flour.

In 1811 Squire Ebenezer Healy moved from Nova Scotia and settled on the farm now occupied by the fifth and sixth generation of Healys—Grant and Lee Haley. His nearest neighbour on the west was 20 miles away. The nearest store was Waterford.

In 1825 Charles Anstice bought 200 acres north and east of the village and moved into the log house erected by Mr. Gilbert.

About the same year, Dyer Wilcox purchased the farm south and east of the village. In 1827 Amaza Wilcox purchased 750 acres one mile north of Springford between the 6th and 7th Concessions.

The south west corner was bought by Munro in 1826 from the Crown as confiscated property of Henry Thompson—a rebel of the 1812-14 war. Later William Hardy owned it and in 1835 Michael Bell bought it and brought his family from New York State through Buffalo and by boat to Port Burwell.

Other early names were Hartwell, Shattuck, Waller, Burns, Kellett, Reynolds, Inglesby, Oatman, Harris, Amos Scott, Christian Otis, Yarrington, Fletcher, John Birdsall, Willet Post and Ephraim Monk (1832).



Last School at Springford

The first school in the Township situated on the eastern high banks of the Spitler, near the 7th Concession, was built in 1812. Two teachers were John Phillips, Jr., and Smithson Waller. The building was of logs built without nails with greased paper windows, split log seats and heated by a seven-foot mud and stick fireplace. A later school east of the Baptist Church burned in 1869 and the last school was built.

The first Baptist Church was replaced in 1855 by a white frame church. This building was moved across the road for a town hall and in 1887 the present church was built.



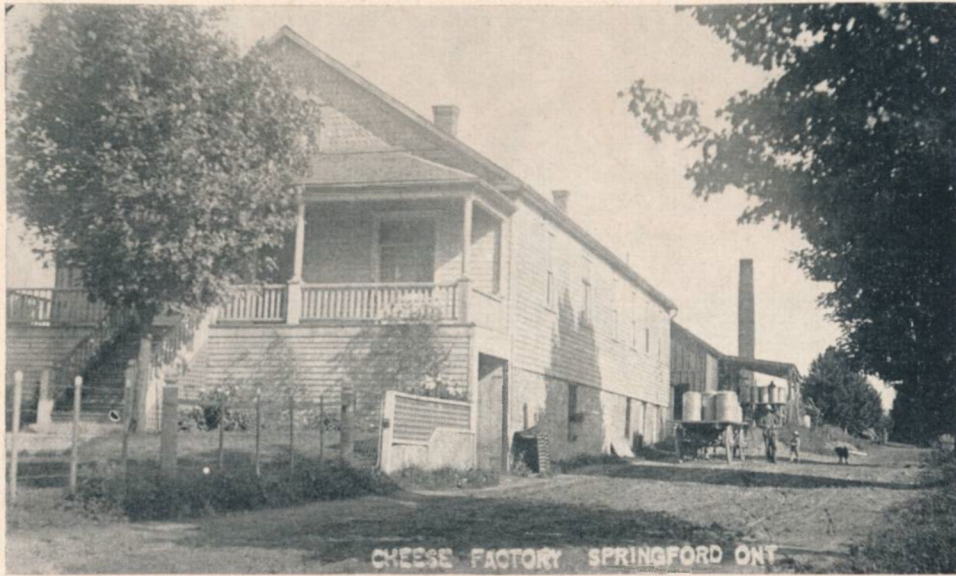
Baptist Church

In 1831 Dyer Wilcox donated land where the United Church now stands for the erection of any orthodox church. The building was first occupied by the Congregationalists and later the Methodists.



United Church

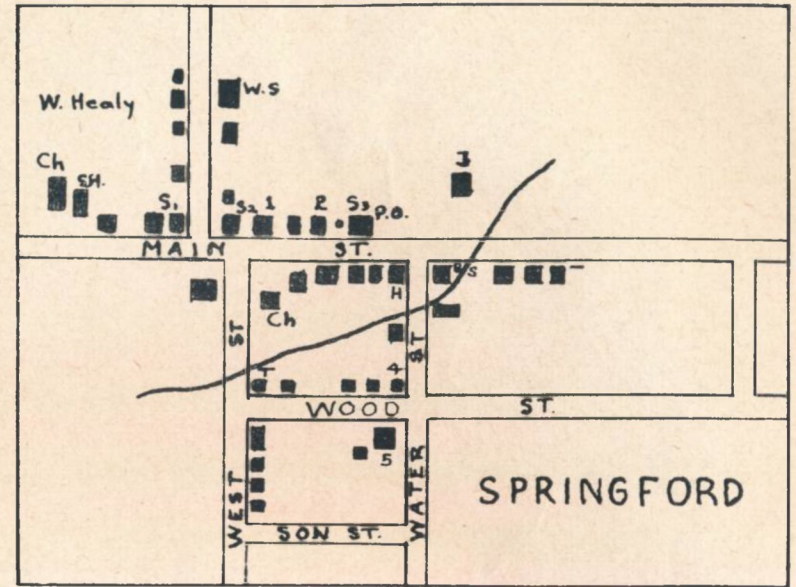
The first brick house of the Township was the Charles Bell house built of brick made in the brick and tile yard on the Jenvey farm.



Cheese Factory

The cheese factory was first owned by A. L. Wilcox and Mr. Collins. Later it was purchased from them by F. C. Anstice, who owned and operated it for the remainder of his life. Later owners were Myrick, Kealy, Christy and Rice.

About 1876 the population was 400. A. L. Wilcox owned two general stores and Mr. Henderson, the postmaster, owned another general business. There were also three hotels (Van Buskirk still owned one), a brick schoolhouse, Methodist, Episcopal and Baptist churches, cheese factory owned by Tom and Jib Miller, brick and tile yard and George Bowlby's tannery.



Springford 1857

- | | |
|---|----------------------------------|
| SH—School. | W.S.—J. Burger Wagon Shop. |
| S1—A. Kinnard Store. | 1.—D. W. Oatman Boots and Shoes. |
| S2—H. Gayfer Store. | 2.—A. L. Wilcox Store. |
| S3—Chauncey Wilcox Store and Post Office. | 3.—C. Anstice. |
| T—Geo. Bowlby Tannery. | 4.—Dyer Wilcox. |
| H—A. Van Buskirk Hotel. | 5.—E. Berss. |

