A History Of

Blandford Township

1867 1967

George Ollege

A

HISTORY

OF

BLANDFORD TOWNSHIP
(County of Oxford)

COMPILED AND WRITTEN BY

GEORGE   OLIVER

(Former Clerk for The Township of Blandford)
1913 – 1957

1867 1967

BIOGRAPHY OF THE AUTHOR
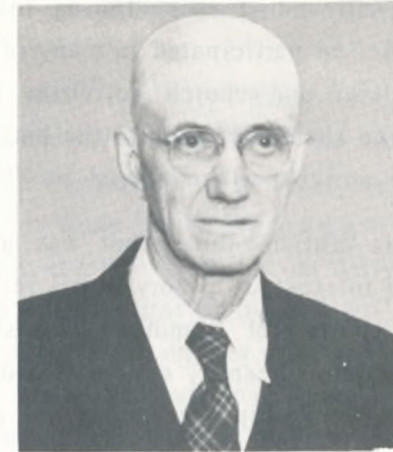
The author, George Oliver, was born in 1878 on Concession 12, Blenheim Township. When he was four years old, his family moved to a farm on Concession 11, Blandford Township, one and one-half miles west of Bright. This farm had been cleared prior to this date by the author's grandfather, William Steedsman, and it was here the author resided till shortly before his death in January, 1964.

The first home on the Oliver farm had been a log cabin but a stone house built in 1868 was the home in which the author and his family lived. This home was destroyed by fire in 1949 but the walls remained unharmed and it was rebuilt two or three years later.

In addition to farming, the author was clerk of Blandford Township from 1913 to 1957, a period of 44 years. As Clerk, he was vitally interested in all activities of the

Township and surrounding area. During the more active period of his life, he participated in many of the political, educational, social and church activities of his native county. Reference should be made to the particular interest he had and the active part he played in "Conservation".

During his lifetime, the author was an avid reader and had a keen interest in history at all levels. The idea of writing a "History of Blandford Township" was encouraged by William Chesney, one of Blandford's reeves, while discussing township records in the clerk's office. The fire of 1949, however, destroyed these records and delayed for a period of time the commencement of writing. The original manuscript was completed a few weeks prior to the author's death. It was the author's wish, in this manuscript, to develop a brief, simple, and direct exposition of historical events and background information related to the Township of Blandford and its people. During his 44 years as Township Clerk, he became thoroughly acquainted with the Township and the people who made Blandford their home. It was his desire to pass on to others who might be interested some of the information and experiences gained during these years.

FOREWORD

Science and discovery have wrought tremendous changes throughout the years since the arrival of the earliest settlers in Canada about a century ago. Advancement has been made in many fields. We have now the automobile, aeroplane, radio and television for our daily use and pleasure. On farms, agricultural methods have changed drastically. Tractors, balers, combines, and milking machines are accepted as standard necessities. In our factories, modern machinery takes the place of manpower. In chemistry, medicine, and education there have been changes which have had a most significant influence on our present day pattern of living not only in the home but also in the political, business, and religious activities of the community.

History is made by what humanity has done or attempted to do in past ages. It is being made in the age in which we live. The accomplishment of great things is usually recorded. The work of the vast majority who have trod "the unsequestered vale of life and kept the noiseless tenor of their way" has been frequently overlooked or forgotten. To these unsung heroes of past generations, we owe a debt of gratitude which we, their progency, can only repay by carrying on where they have left off. What we have is too frequently taken for granted and accepted without thought. The people and circumstances which have made possession possible are too often forgotten.

It is now much more than a hundred years since the earliest settlers arrived in our province after a journey which lasted often as long as eight weeks. This journey was frequently made in poorly-equipped sailing vessels and under hazardous conditions. The older people who came were prompted by a desire to give their children the opportunities and freedom offered by a new land; the young were frequently prompted by the spirit of adventure. All have helped in giving us the heritage of citizenship which we now enjoy in this Canada of ours. To these we owe a great debt. It is, therefore, with great admiration and respect for the zeal, industry, and thrift of the early settlers and pioneers of this country that the writer is prompted to endeavour to record something of the courage, trials, hardships, and progress of those who have gone before us and to whom we owe so much.

In the pages and paragraphs which follow, the writer has included, in brief description only, a few of the happenings which represent the historical background of Blandford Township. The writer has long been interested in the development of all aspects of life within the Township and its neighbouring communities. During his 44 years as Clerk of Blandford, he has had ample opportunity to become well acquainted with the Township and its people. The pages of this manuscript are humbly submitted with the hope that they will assist both present and future residents of Blandford to understand, and appreciate more fully, the value of the heritage which they possess.

The writer wishes to thank his many friends who have supplied valuable information in both oral and written form; information which has contributed much to the interest and value of what has been written.

George Oliver

November 22, 1963.

"A HISTORY OF BLANDFORD TOWNSHIP"

This history is a Centennial Project sponsored by the Municipal Council of the Township of Blandford to mark the occasion of Canada's hundredth birthday.

In making this history available to residents and former residents of Blandford and to others who may by interested, it is the wish of the members of the Council to provide some tangible and permanent means whereby present and future residents may discover and remember the small but important part which the people of Blandford have played in the development of Canada before and during the past Century.

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Reeve	– G. N. Aspden
Councillors	– M. G. Balls
	– L. Facey
	– J. H. Sippel
	– H. E. Budd
Clerk Treasurer	– S. J. Currah

PART ONE

THE DEVELOPMENT OF EARLY SETTLEMENTS IN BLANDFORD TOWNSHIP

The Township of Blandford in the County of Oxford extends northward from the Governor's Road (Highway #2) to the boundary of Waterloo County. It is bounded by Blenheim on the east and the Thames River on the west (except from Concession 9 to the Waterloo boundary). These boundaries contain an area approximately fourteen miles long but varying in width from four and one-half miles to six miles due to the winding course of the Thames River. The area covers approximately seventy square miles or almost forty-five thousand acres.

In 1788, the portion of Canada which is now Ontario was divided by Lord Dorchester into four districts. From 1788–1791, the part of this area now forming Blandford Township was contained in the District of Nassau. Following his appointment as Lieutenant-Governor in 1791, John Graves Simcoe changed the names and boundaries of these districts. From 1792–1799, Blandford was part of Home District and from 1800–1836, part of London District.

In 1792, under Simcoe's direction, the original boundaries of Oxford County were defined. The Townships

MAP OF BLANDFORD TOWNSHIP
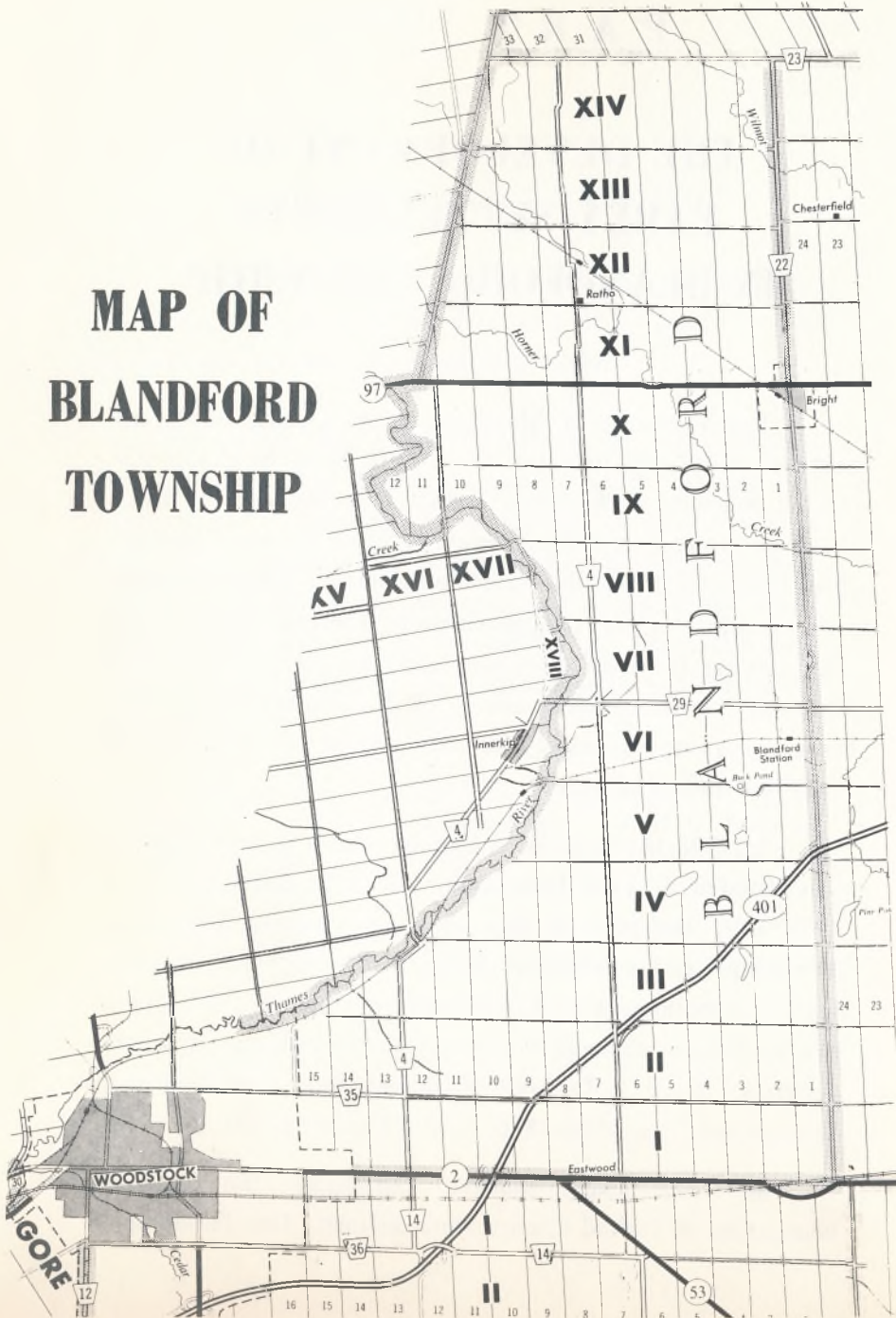
of Blandford and Blenheim were included. In a later adjustment by Act of Parliament passed in 1798 and taking effect on January 1, 1800, Blandford and Blenheim along with the Townships of Burford, Norwich and Dereham formed Oxford County. In 1837, the townships of Zorra, Nissouri and Oakland were added and Oxford County became part of the District of Brock. In 1851, further divisions and adjustments were made and the county gradually acquired its present form.

Oxford County was named after Oxford in England as were several townships contained therein. The Townships of Blandford and Blenheim were named by John Graves Simcoe prior to 1796. Simcoe probably intended a compliment to the Duke of Marlborough, Marquess of Blandford and owner of Blenheim Palace which is situated near Oxford.

Up till 1941, the naming of counties and townships was a prerogative of the Lieutenant-Governor. Settlers were rarely consulted although they did name most of the towns and villages.

Although Simcoe was a military man whose ideas were dominated by aristocratic concepts unsuited to pioneer conditions in Upper Canada, he contributed much towards the pioneer settlement and development of Southwestern Ontario. Before coming to Canada, he gave some thought to the location of a suitable site for the capital of Upper Canada. It was considered that Niagara and Toronto were too close to the American border and were hence too

exposed to attack from the enemy south of this border. Simcoe picked on the site of the present city of London as the spot for his new capital. While he never gave up hope or abondoned his plan for this location, no-one else seemed to think the plan practical and Simcoe's dream was never realized. It has resulted however in the development of two fair-sized cities.

In 1793, Simcoe made a trip through Southwestern Ontario during which he inspected the site for his proposed capital. Returning eastward from London, he examined a second site at the "Upper Forks" which was supposed to be the head of navigation for boats and bateaux using the Thames River. This site included rising land on both sides of the Thames River where it first meets the Governor's Road. This appeared to Simcoe as a splendid spot on which to build a town. He called this proposed town "Oxford". The "reserve" set aside for it included parts of the present Townships of East Oxford, North Oxford and Blandford. With the choosing of the site for the first townplot within this "reserve" in 1830, we have the beginning of the present city of Woodstock. As Woodstock has grown, over a period of years it has absorbed land from all three of these townships.

Simcoe quickly realized that, for the development of this area, a road was needed giving access from Toronto and Hamilton on the east. Following his trip in 1793, he took immediate action to have such a road constructed. "Dundas Street" was surveyed as far as the present city

of Woodstock and opened westward as a wagon-road before the end of 1793. Settlers coming into Blenheim and East Oxford appear to have been responsible for opening the stretch between Paris and Woodstock. The line of "Dundas Street" was continued to London in 1799. This line became known as the Governor's Road and is still so-called by many residents in Blandford. A "Stone Road" subsequently linked Brantford and Woodstock by way of Burford and Eastwood. It is not surprising that the settlement and development of Blandford Township was closely linked with the activities of these roads.

Among the first settlers to come into Oxford County were United Empire Loyalists who came following the American Revolution around 1793–94. Most of these appear to have settled in the southern townships of the county. Since Blandford was a "school reserve" and not opened during the period of Loyalist Settlement, the first settlers in Blandford were largely from the British Isles. The routes most commonly used by these settlers were the Governor's Road and the stage road from Ancaster to Brantford and west-ward to Ingersoll which was developed about 1796 and which later became known as the Hamilton Road. By 1820, there were roads connecting these two provincial highroads. Other settlers, however, entered the township from the north by way of the Huron Road and still others came by way of Galt and the "Dickie Settlement" which lies a few miles west of the present City of Galt. Some of the writer's ancestors were among those who followed this route. Most

of the early settlers in the northern part of the township were Scottish as was evident by the building of two Presbyterian churches in the parts of the township where they settled.

The early history of Blandford Township is, as might be expected, closely interwoven with that of Blenheim Township and the surrounding areas. Settlement activity in this area dates back to the late years of the eighteenth century. When John Graves Simcoe became Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada in 1792, he invited Thomas Watson and his nephew Thomas Horner to come to Canada, bring friends with them and make a settlement. Watson and Horner may have done Simcoe some favour during the American War of Independence. While not confirmed, it has been suggested that, on one occasion, Simcoe became a prisoner of the Americans and Watson or Horner had assisted him in some manner. Watson and Horner came to Canada in 1793 and later formed a settlement near what is now Princeton and west towards Eastwood. Horner was one of the first white men to set foot in this area. It is said that Simcoe's grant of land to Horner involved building a grist mill and saw-mill to serve the settlement which would follow. This Horner did on the bank of the stream that later was named Horner's Creek in his honour. However, misfortunes followed Horner's enterprises. The saw-mill was burned and the dam at the grist-mill broke down. Following Simcoe's departure in 1796, Upper Canada was administered by Peter Russell until the arrival in 1799 of General Peter Hunter who became Simcoe's successor.

Russell discontinued all grants of land to Americans and under Hunter's administration the agreement with Horner was cancelled. Horner left in dissatisfaction and later joined the Canadian Militia and fought against the Americans in 1812. Although he had been born in New Jersey in 1767 where his relatives had settled, he was a British Subject. Later in 1820, he was elected to the Legislature which office he held, except for a few months, until his death in 1834. Although something of an adventurer, Horner has been described as a man of sterling character and active mind.

During this period, the nearest settlements to Blandford and Blenheim Townships were Hamilton on the east and Chatham on the west.

Settlement of the area which is now Woodstock and Blandford Township began sometime around 1800. As was stated earlier, Simcoe, during his term of office, selected a site on which Woodstock in now located. There is record of some settlement on Dundas Street in East Oxford opposite the first town plot of Woodstock as early as 1804 although we learn that, as late as 1813, the area on which Woodstock now stands was still pretty much a wilderness.

Under instructions from the Surveyor-General, at the suggestion of Thomas Horner M.L.A., Mahlon Burwell chose the site of the first townplot in Woodstock in 1830.

Settlement in Blandford was encouraged by the promise of grants of land and the relatively low investment required

to purchase a fair sized lot. Settlers acquired their land in one of three ways. There were a number of squatters located on the town reserve set aside for Woodstock. There were also a number of squatters who settled in the south end of Blandford. Some lands in Blandford were patented in the 1820's and must have been granted to settlers subject to fees under the Regulations of 1804 and 1819. Although these lands were called "free grants", they were really free only to Loyalists, military settlers and indigent settlers. Other settlers paid fees or, after 1830, purchased their land directly from the Crown. The first sale of Crown Lands is recorded as taking place on January 19th, 1832. The price was twelve shillings per lot. The lot usually involved two hundred acres. As time went on, land which had been set aside as "Reserves" became available for settlement. (The whole of Blandford was reserved as "School Lands" until after 1815.) During the first half of the nineteenth century, settlement of Blandford moved very quickly. A number of surveys dividing the township into concessions and lots paved the way for settlers. Records of surveys in which Blandford was included indicate a movement from south to north as follows:

a survey by Augustus Jones in 1793;

a survey by Pareen Lawe in 1797;

a survey by Andrew Miller in 1824;

a survey by Mahlon or Lewis Burwell in 1832;

a survey by Peter Carroll in 1834.

The following information obtained directly from records in the Registry Office in Woodstock indicates the

trend of settlement in Blandford Township during the first half of the nineteenth century. Along the Governor's Road land was acquired from the Crown as follows:

Lot 1 (200 acres) — by Kings' College in 1835.

Lot 2 (200 acres) — by Edward Towell in 1836.

Lot 3 (200 acres) — by Kings' College in 1835.

Lot 4 (200 acres) — by Kings' College in 1835.

Lot 5 (200 acres) — by Elizabeth Margaret Muttlebury in 1834.

Lot 6 (200 acres) — by Kings' College in 1835.

Six months later, Lot 6 was transferred:

100 acres to Rear Admiral Vansittart;

100 acres to Michael Overholt.

Vansittart also acquired a number of other pieces of land in this area around 1851.

On Concession 2, deeds were acquired by the following:

Lot 5 (200 acres) — by Rear Admiral Vansittart in 1855.

Lot 4 (200 acres) — by Michael Overholt in 1860.

Lot 3 (200 acres) — by Philip Delatre in 1837.

In the north end of the township along Concession 14, deeds were acquired from the Crown a few years later. In most instances, the settlers purchased half lots of 100 acres:

N½ of Lot 1 (100 acres) — by Thomas Leckie in 1858.

S½ of Lot 1 (100 acres) — by John Murray in 1854.

(This land was transferred to David Bell in 1855.)

N½ of Lot 2 (100 acres) — by William Dixon in 1850.

S½ of Lot 2 (100 acres) — by James Hunter in 1856.
N½ of Lot 3 (100 acres) — by John Leslie in 1838.
S½ of Lot 3 (100 acres) — by Wm. Macdonald in 1836.
N½ of Lot 4 (100 acres) — by Alex. Thompson in 1849.
S½ of Lot 4 (100 acres) — by Alex. Thompson in 1851.
N½ of Lot 5 (100 acres) — by Thomas Baird in 1858.
S½ of Lot 5 (100 acres) — by Wm. Marshall in 1856.
N½ of Lot 6 (100 acres) — by John Lake in 1857.

Joseph Pettigrew whose name appears later in this section acquired S½ of Lot 4, Concession 12 from the Crown in 1890. He later acquired the S½ of Lot 5.

The 100 acres on which the author spent nearly all his years was acquired from the Crown in 1856, taken over by William Steedsman in 1870 and purchased by the author's father, Robert Oliver, in 1882.

Records show that the first resale of these lands following purchase from the crown brought prices ranging from $500 to $1400 or $1500 depending upon the extent of clearing and the nature and condition of the buildings. A few lots brought $2000.

A number of those who settled in the Blandford area were military men with army or navy service. Several of these were officers whom it is presumed had served with Wellington in the Battle of Waterloo or Quatre Bras. They made their homes on or near what is now Dundas Street in Woodstock. They brought with them elaborate equipment and evidences of wealth consisting not only of house furnishings but horses and carriages, footmen and servants.

Outfits of four-in-hand with attendants, driving around the settlement, were a familiar sight. Many of these people disappeared after a time no doubt returning to their home land. A few remained, among them being Captain Drew (R.N.), Colonel Light, and Graham whose names have been given to streets in Woodstock.

A certain Major Barwick, who later became Reeve of Blandford, lived on Lot 15, Concession 2, Blandford where he erected buildings and fences. He evidently brought with him from the old land some ideas and customs which did not exactly coincide with pioneer conditions. It is told that, when he drove out his lane, he had his servant go along to open and shut the gate at the road, a gesture which was considered by other early settlers to be unnecessary.

Another settler who took up land in Blandford was Admiral Vansittart who came in 1834. Captain Andrew Drew (R.N.) whose arrival preceded that of Vansittart arranged a grant of land for Vansittart along the Thames River north of what is now Woodstock. When Vansittart arrived, he did not settle on this location but chose instead the previously mentioned two hundred acre lot on the second concession of Blandford where he established his home. This he called Eastwood Park from which is derived the name of Eastwood Village. On this land, he built first a rambling collection of log buildings and later a forty-room brick mansion. Being a sailor, the furnishings and decoration showed the nautical influence. One of the rooms was set aside as a chapel in which he conducted services on

Sundays for his family and those in his employ who numbered about forty. At the ornamental entrance to the grounds, two stone gateposts were erected with lamps on top. Trees on the grounds were planted in arrangement to represent the armies facing each other in the Battle of Waterloo in 1815. The home later was owned in 1875–79 by T. C. Patterson of the Toronto "Mail" who often entertained Sir John A. Macdonald. The writer, in his early years as clerk, visited the property on a number of occasions and knew some of the tenants who succeeded the Vansittart and Patterson families. The above appears to be a fairly accurate description of the property as it was in the time of Admiral Vansittart.

In addition to the 200 acres which he held on Concession 2 and other pieces of land in the area, Vansittart evidently held timber rights to land which extended northward from Eastwood to Concession 4 and eastward to the township townline. He built a wooden railway running northeasterly from Eastwood through this land. Evidences of this railroad are still to be seen. Over this route, he transported timber on trucks fitted with flanged wheels and drawn by horses or oxen to his sawmill at Eastwood. This sawmill was a large well-equipped building situated on the corner where two provincial highways now meet. Most of the lumber was sold to help build a plank roadway from Hamilton west towards Woodstock during the years 1841–1844. The old Vansittart farm is now divided by the new 401 Highway which runs northeasterly through it. Elsewhere in the township, pioneers were not so wealthy nor did they

come so well equipped. For many it was a hard and bitter struggle to clear the land and establish even a very primitive home. The hours were long, pleasures were few and the struggle for a livelihood grim.

Having acquired their land, the pioneers were faced with the task of building their homes and getting the first crop. Their experiences were endured with satisfaction and gratification. Many were acquiring for the first time a home and farm of their own. Until after 1830, Settlement Duties required the pioneer to erect a house which was at least 16' x 20' on the inside. However, these Duties were not enforced and the first houses in Blandford varied a great deal in size and in the number of windows used. The houses had a ground floor and an upstairs or loft reached by pegs driven into the logs for the children to ascend, not a "butt and a ben" such as many settlers had used in the Old Land. They were heated by a fireplace and lighted by a small window with four panes of glass 6" x 8" usually obtained in Toronto. The fireplace served also for cooking and for lighting the room at night although tallow candles or dips provided light for many of the activities of the family. The light from the fireplace was so important that fireplaces were often retained after stoves became cheaper and more efficient. While in some respects these pioneer homes were comfortable, it was not uncommon for the children to find snow on their bed clothes in the morning if the state of "chinking" proved unsatisfactory.

The following will give some idea of what Blandford

was like when the settlers arrived. The whole area was covered with wooded lands of different varieties; in the north by deciduous trees; in the centre by conifers blending into hardwoods on the south. (Most of these trees have of course disappeared to make way for cultivated fields. It is interesting to note however that the shortage of woodlots in Blandford has prompted the planting of several municipal and privately owned lots in recent years.) Early settlers found a number of streams and several lakes of considerable size in the township which played an important part in determining the location of their homes and many of their occupational activities. The water supply was then and still is fairly abundant. The Thames River has been mentioned as forming much of the western boundary of the township. This provided a natural and abundant water supply for many settlers. (It is used today on some farms for irrigation purposes.) Wilmot Creek enters the northeast corner of the township, crossing the east townline from Lot 1, Concession 13. The northwest and central area is supplied by Horner's Creek which rises in North Easthope Township, crosses Blandford's west boundary in Concession 12 and is joined on the north half of Lot 5, Concession 11 by what was commonly called Bear Creek which enters the township at the west boundary of Concession 13. The lakes mentioned all lie in the central and southern portions of the township. A very deep lake on Concession 7, commonly known as Hagey's Lake, is today owned by John Mitchell. On Concession 4 is a 60 acre lake today known as Park Haven Lake, owned by Allison Brothers

who operate a well-known pleasure and camping resort. In early days, a sawmill and lumbermen's shanties lined the shore of another lake located in Concession 4. When the Credit Valley Railroad was completed, a corduroy road with wooden rails was laid to convey timber and lumber from the area around this lake to the railroad. Cars were hauled by horses and oxen. Much of this timber was sold to Hay and Co. in Woodstock. Today, this lake, a good fishing and boating lake, is owned by the Chesney family and is known as Buchan's Lake. Farther south between Concession 3 and 4 is a small lake known as Fowler's Lake which has been sold to the Department of Highways with prospects of being made into a nature sanctuary.

In the central portion of the township, there were bogs, swamps, ponds and bushland where birds, fauna and flora, and plants of rare varieties abounded. Even today naturalists come from a distance to find these specimens which grow only under certain conditions. The wild orchid, that exquisitely beautiful flower commonly called the Lady's Slipper, is found in this locality.

Many Indian relics have been found in the township, especially in the central part where light soil, creeks, lakes, woods and abundance of game made ideal locations for Indian camps.

The writer, as Clerk of Blandford, had available fairly complete records of population growth and economic development up to April 3, 1949, at which time most of these records were lost when fire totally destroyed his

home and all contents. The following figures obtained at Woodstock Public Library do, however, give a fair indication of the trend of growth.

In 1840, there were 327 people in the township including those in the Parish of Woodstock. In 1850, the population of Woodstock itself numbered 2,000. Woodstock decided to incorporate as a town separating in 1851 from Blandford which then formed a municipality and elected a council with Major Barwick as Reeve. This council met at Bond's Corners where the Bond family had been early settlers. (Villages and townships did not elect councils until after the Baldwin Municipal Act of 1849. Between 1841 and 1849, there were elected District Councils. Before 1841, local government was in the hands of the District Court of Quarter Sessions. Township meetings were held however to elect officers. As has been mentioned earlier, Blandford, for its first few years, formed part of the District of Brock and would hence be administered before 1841 by the District Court of Quarter Sessions and between 1841 and 1849 by a District Council.) The children of Blandford in 1850 numbered 380. Livestock kept pace with human settlement. In 1842, there were 112 horses. In 1840, cows numbered 188, and, in 1852, had increased to 488. In 1861, the census showed a population of 1060 males and 930 females. The writer remembers his father who came to Canada with his family as a boy in 1853, stating that it was said, in the Old Land, that "Canada was a hell for men and oxen but a heaven for women and horses." During one period in the early settlement of Blandford, there were only

two women in the north part of the township: Mrs. John Baird on the north part of Lot 5, Concession 11, and Mrs. John Fairbairn on the north half of Lot 1, Concession 13. The writer remembers these women who, in later years, retired to the Village of Bright and lived to a very old age.

The following prices are indicative of the economic level of the area around 1870 and represent a startling contrast with today's prices for similar articles of lesser quality:

CLOTHING:

Felt Hats $1.50
Stockings and Sox ..... .15
Shoes $2.00
Men's Vests .... .30
Ready-made Suits $8.00
Tailored to measure
    Suits $20.00
Men's Overcoats $10.00

FOOD:

Beef .... .05 per lb.
Pork .... .06 per lb.
Eggs .... .11 per doz.
Butter .... .11 per lb.
Bread .... .04 per loaf
Tea .... .20 per lb.
Oranges .... .13 per doz.
Tin Salmon .... .13 per lb.

OTHER NECESSARY
ARTICLES:

Bar of Soap .... .03
Cough Medicine .... .19
Nickel plated Alarm
    Clock .... .62
Pocket Watch .... .50

Wages, of course, corresponded in the same ratio. Fifty cents was not an uncommon wage for a ten hour day.

Personal anecdotes, although based on hearsay, are usually interesting. The following are included as showing something of the nature and character of some of Blandford's early inhabitants:

A prosperous farmer on Concession 14 had a large family of girls. Three old bachelor uncles lived nearby. The uncles promised one thousand dollars to each of the girls if they would marry a man who owned a "stone" house.

It is told that, when Admiral Vansittart arrived in 1834, he brought with him, among many other things, a considerable-sized sailing boat which he expected to use on the River Thames. To his disappointment, he found that the Thames in Canada was not the size and depth of the Thames in England.

A young man arriving from Scotland obtained work with a farmer in the Galt area. They were stumping with oxen and a derrick. The young man's job was to handle the oxen while the owner adjusted the chain around the stump. On one occasion, the oxen started before the chain was properly placed catching the owner's hand between the chain and the stump, thereby holding the man fast. He commenced scolding the young man and threatened what he would do when he got hold of him. The young man dropped everything and ran. He arrived in the northern part of Blandford where he obtained refuge and later became the owner of the south half of Lots 4 and 5 in the twelfth concession. He was an active citizen in municipal and church life, and became second Warden of Oxford County, the late Joseph Pettigrew.

Another settler, Wm. Steedsman started building a house for a friend who had just arrived from the old country with his family. The first tree felled killed a cow, which

was quite a calamity in those days.

The following little incident is indicative of the individuality and ruggedness of the generations of the past.

James H. was riding home with Michael A. when they came within sight of a new house which J.H. had recently built.

J.H. "Do ye ken whose fine new house is that up there on the hill?"

M.A. "Aye, it belongs to that auld drunken body they call J.H."

J.H. "Stop Michael, I'll no ride wi you."

The buggy stopped and J.H. got out.

It is probably fitting at this point to give the names of the early settlers and their descendants who achieved the high honour of representing Blandford Township as Warden of Oxford County. The following Blandford Reeves have had this honour:

> Major John Barwick 1857—58
> Joseph Pettigrew   1890
> John Silcox   1929
> William Chesney   1955

Many other worthy men and women have toiled and helped to develop this fair township by taking an active part in the municipal, educational, and religious life of the communities in which they lived. Their names cannot be recorded here but we would suggest and recommend that their descendants endeavour to remember them to posterity

by one means or another before the story of their efforts and accomplishments is forgotten and forever lost.

As the years have passed and population increased, there have been changes in habits and personalities. Early settlers coming from different parts of the old land brought with them distinctive personalities and individual characteristics some of which were outstanding. In the present generation, there is more of a sameness of character and outlook lacking that individuality so commonly found in pioneer people.

The story of Blandford Township, from pioneer days to the present date, forms a fascinating and enlightening part of the history of Canada. Let us do what we can to preserve this portion of Canada's history.

PART TWO

THE GROWTH
OF
VILLAGES

Following the arrival of settlers, the clearing of land, and the establishment of homes and farms in various parts of the township, there quickly developed the beginnings of community life. Villages sprang up. Churches and schools were built. Railroads were planned to form a social link between towns and villages, and to transport the products necessary for the existence and expansion of the community.

The Township of Blandford, due evidently to its geographical location, has remained primarily a rural municipality. The Village of Ratho was the only village to develop wholly within the township. The Village of Bright, situated partly in Blandford and partly in the Township of Blenheim on the corner of Concession 11 and the township line, including Lot 1 Blandford, and Lot 24, Concession 10, Blenheim was the largest village to develop in the Blandford area.

VILLAGE OF BRIGHT

Mr. George Baird, one of the earliest pioneers, a man of strong personality and business ability, built a corner store on what is now Highway 97. Mr. Baird, being an ardent admirer of the English statesman, John Bright, gave the name Bright to what he hoped would become a town of considerable importance (which of course it has).

Prior to this venture, Mr. Baird had built a store on the northwest corner of Lot 24, Concession 13, Blenheim. This store also became the first Post Office in the area for several miles around. The Post Office was opened for a few minutes after services in the Chesterfield Church on the opposite corner, to give the settlers their mail. Some of these had walked several miles to church. As the Village of Bright began to grow, this Post Office was closed and the Post Office at Bright became the centre from which the mail of the community was dispersed.

It is fitting that we should recall the names of some of the people who came to Bright, operated business places in the village, and had a part in its early life and activities. Besides Baird's corner store, there was a good sized frame store which stood on or near the ground on which the turnip plant is now located on the east side of the main street south of the railroad. The early ownership of this store is not certain. It was, however, owned for a period of time by James Henry. Following the tenure of James Henry, it was
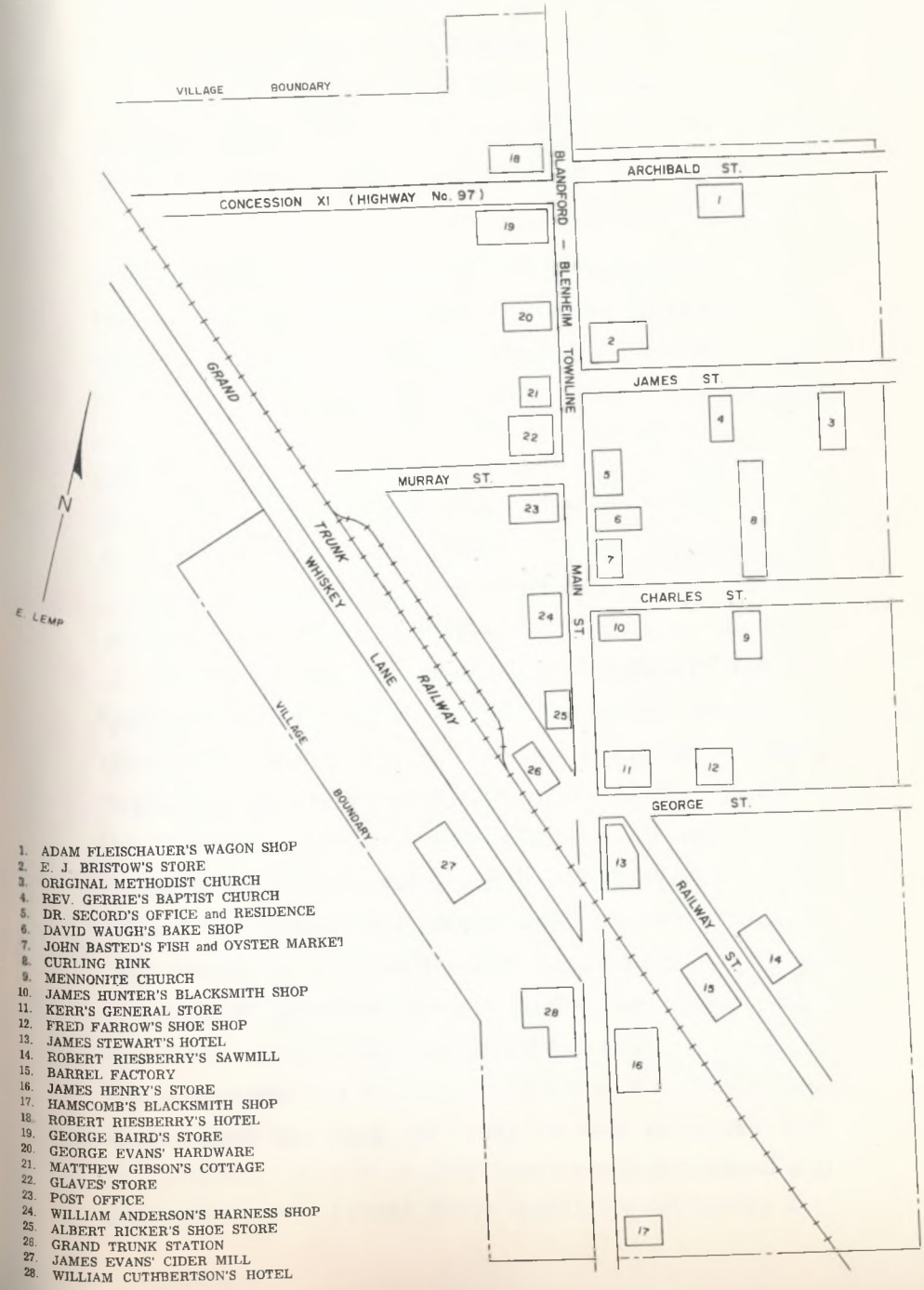
1. ADAM FLEISCHAUER'S WAGON SHOP
2. E. J BRISTOW'S STORE
3. ORIGINAL METHODIST CHURCH
4. REV. GERRIE'S BAPTIST CHURCH
5. DR. SECORD'S OFFICE and RESIDENCE
6. DAVID WAUGH'S BAKE SHOP
7. JOHN BASTED'S FISH and OYSTER MARKET
8. CURLING RINK
9. MENNONITE CHURCH
10. JAMES HUNTER'S BLACKSMITH SHOP
11. KERR'S GENERAL STORE
12. FRED FARROW'S SHOE SHOP
13. JAMES STEWART'S HOTEL
14. ROBERT RIESBERRY'S SAWMILL
15. BARREL FACTORY
16. JAMES HENRY'S STORE
17. HAMSCOMB'S BLACKSMITH SHOP
18. ROBERT RIESBERRY'S HOTEL
19. GEORGE BAIRD'S STORE
20. GEORGE EVANS' HARDWARE
21. MATTHEW GIBSON'S COTTAGE
22. GLAVES' STORE
23. POST OFFICE
24. WILLIAM ANDERSON'S HARNESS SHOP
25. ALBERT RICKER'S SHOE STORE
26. GRAND TRUNK STATION
27. JAMES EVANS' CIDER MILL
28. WILLIAM CUTHBERTSON'S HOTEL

no longer used as a store. Eventually, it became a chopping mill and finally was destroyed by fire. During James Henry's ownership, James Kerr rented the building and kept store for a brief period until he built the brick store in which the Post Office is presently located and now owned by Merton Cuthbertson.

To the south of the building owned by James Henry, was a blacksmith shop built and operated by Mr. Hamscomb. This shop was later purchased and operated by Arthur Duncan, and is now the property of Sim Frier.

Some seventy or eighty years ago, George Evans built and operated the hardware store now owned by Graham Bros. South of this store is the cottage, now the home of Leon Cattin, where Matthew Gibson, Railway Station Master, lived for many years following the arrival of the railroad in 1857. Adjacent to this cottage was the store built in more recent years by the Glaves Family. The next building south of the Glaves store was owned by W.B. Wilson who, for many years, was Post Master and kept a little confectionery store. Halfway between the Post Office and Railway Station was William Anderson's home and harness shop, a property which is now owned and operated as Cook's Furniture Repair Shop. Albert Ricker, a shoemaker and cobbler was the next neighbour south. Following Mr. Ricker's retirement, the Standard Bank, later the Bank of Commerce, opened an office in the room that was the cobbler's shop. This was about the year 1904. The Bank was later moved to a location in Glaves new store.

In early days, Bright was well supplied with hotels. The Arlington, south of the Railway Station, was owned and operated by William Cuthbertson whose three grandsons and granddaughter now live in the village. Two other hotels operated in the village. One of these was operated by James Stewart in the house just north of the railroad on the east side of Main Street. Mr. Stewart had lost a hand and wore a hook which was held in wholesome respect by anyone inclined to create a disturbance in the hotel. The other hotel owned by Robert Riesberry was situated on the Southeast Corner of Lot 1, Concession 11, opposite the store built by Mr. George Baird. This building was later demolished to make way for Highway 97. There was a large stable to the north of this hotel which, in more recent years, has been changed into a garage.

Adjacent to the Arlington Hotel to the northwest along Cuthbertson Street, better known to some of the earlier inhabitants as 'Whiskey Lane', was a home and cidermill owned by James Evans. This was always a busy place in the fall when Mr. Evans commenced making applesauce. During the first years, apples were ground at the mill and pressed into cider. The farmers made the sauce at home in large kettles over a fireplace in the yard. This was an allday chore. Mr. Evans later installed three vats heated by steam pipes running through the bottom of the vats. The sauce was then made directly at the mill. On the evening prior to taking apples to the mill, the farmer and his neighbours usually got together for a "paring bee" to peel and quarter Talman Sweet apples for thickening the

cider. About a pailful of these apples was required for each 10 gallons of cider.

On Railway Street which runs parallel to the railway on the north east side of Main Street, Robert Riesberry owned and operated a sawmill. Across the street, opposite the sawmill, was the barrel or heading factory where barrel heads were made, providing a good market for the owners of woodlots. The trees were cut into blocks long enough to make two lengths of barrel heads. The area later became the location for Swan's lumber-yard and planing-mill. (John Dryburgh, a maker of wooden planes, who lived on the north half of Lot 5, Concession 10, had his plane blocks cut in the barrel factory. He then employed 3 or 4 men to complete the wooden planes in a shop on his farm).

East of the present Post Office, on George Street, Fred Farrow had a shoe shop. North of the Post Office on the east side of Main Street was the Blacksmith Shop operated for many years by James Hunter. This shop later became a garage; was changed back to an Implement and Blacksmith Shop; and is now used as the Fire Hall.

North of the Blacksmith Shop, across the street, John Basted kept a fish and oyster shop. On the street east of the Blacksmith Shop, was erected, in early days, a Mennonite Church where morning and evening services were held regularly. Opposite the church was the skating and curling rink where the village reservoir is now situated. Curling in this rink was a favourite pastime for some of the older residents of the village and others in the com-

munity. These were John Cowan, George Buchan, Ned Wilson, Willie Bond and other devotees of the "Roarin Game".

North of John Basted's Shop stood a Baker Shop which for a period of years was operated by David Waugh. This later became a Meat Shop where butchers sold their various cuts to the public. It is presently occupied by Mr. Prestage. Behind the Baker Shop, Joseph Wilson, a brother of W.B. Wilson, had a Tinsmith Shop. This ceased to operate when Mr. Wilson moved to Molesworth.

A short distance east on the south side of James Street was the Baptist Church which long ago was removed. The Rev. Mr. Gerrie, an elderly gentleman with saintlike qualities, was the minister. His congregation consisted not only of Baptists but included others in the community who admired him. This church was used as a schoolhouse until the brick school was built at the south end of the village in 1875.

Directly opposite the old Post Office is a frame house which in past days had many changes of tenants. Mr. Hodgins used part of it as a Tailor Shop. He was followed by George Kerr also a tailor who plied his trade for a number of years. Following this period, for some years, doctors had their homes and offices in this house. The first doctor to come to the village was Doctor Secord who served the community in the 1870's and part of the 80's. He was followed by Dr. Lake who moved to Brantford about 1890. Dr. Bromley followed Dr. Lake but, after a few

years, moved to Sault Ste. Marie. Then came Dr. Dewar who had his home and drugstore where Lem Cassidy now lives, on Highway 97. In 1918, Dr. Dewar moved to London and, since his time, Bright has not had, except for a very brief period, a resident doctor.

On the northeast corner of Main and James Streets, stood E.J. Bristow's General Store a part of which was used as a Drugstore. William McKie was the druggist. Originally owned by Herbert Sharp, this store had a succession of tenants among whom were Dave Dickson and John Robertson who was a son of the Rev. Wm. Robertson well-known minister at Chesterfield. James Gunn, a native of Durham, also used this building as a drugstore about the year 1900. In later years, Dave Aldridge had a Tinsmith Shop and Hardware Store in this building. Also, during this period, a portion of it was used as a Barber Shop by Frank Buckley. In the late 1920's, the whole structure was destroyed one night by fire. North of this building, in more recent years, Harry Walters had his home and Shoe Shop.

The store originally built and operated by George Baird likewise had a succession of owners and tenants among whom were: Mr. Cameron, Wilson & Gatzki, C.W. Laing, John Bristow and Ed Wettlaufer. Glaves store, in the early 1900's, became Bristow and Glaves when John Bristow joined in partnership. Somewhere around 1926, it became once more Glaves Store when John Bristow retired from business.

East from Main Street on Archibald Street (Highway

97) was a Wagon Shop owned and operated by Adam Fleisch-auer. Like other shops of its kind, it had a ramp leading to the second floor on which wagons and buggies were taken up and down. Tim Bruel's Garage is now located in this building.

The first sidewalks in Bright were of boards or plank, cement not yet having come into use. They were frequently not too wide and quite often had open ditches along the side. A story is told of two elderly residents who had lingered a little too long in one or another of the several hotels mentioned above. They were making their way home along the plank sidewalk on Main Street when, with each other's help, they got off into the ditch. While trying to get back on again, one of them made the grade and was trying to help his companion. He said to him "Are you up Willie?" Willie made reply, "I think there's another fold in me yet."

The buildings and events just described may give the reader some idea of the layout and nature of life in Bright during the years from 1850 to 1900.

VILLAGE OF RATHO

It is not known who gave Ratho its name but, since there is a town or hamlet in the Old Land by this name, no doubt some nostalgic early settler was moved by sentiment to give this title to what he hoped would become a thriving town in this part of the New Land.

As the township became settled, a Post Office was opened at what is now called Upper Ratho with Messrs. Elliot, Williams, and Morrow acting as postmasters in turn. Mr. Morrow had high hopes that Ratho would grow into a town following the coming of the railroad in 1857. About this time, he built the large two-storey brick store south of the railroad, the beginning of Upper Ratho, and was instrumental in having lots and streets planned and named in preparation for the town which he hoped would develop. About the same time, a number of buildings sprang up at the crossroads farther south and became known as Lower Ratho. A Wagon Shop was erected on the northwest corner, a Presbyterian Church on the northeast corner, a Blacksmith Shop on the southeast corner, a small stone Store and Shoe Shop on the southwest corner, and a Forester's Hall, still in use, was located west of the corner on Concession 12. The Wagon Shop was owned and operated by Nicholas Smith, the Blacksmith Shop by a Mr. Currie, and the Store and Shoe Shop by James Kerr who later built a store on the east side of Main Street in Bright. Joseph

Hepworth learned the shoemaking trade from Mr. Kerr and carried on the business for some years following Mr. Kerr's move to Bright.

In those days, shoes were made by the local artisans and were of heavy cow-hide and calf-hide. The boots for the men and boys were usually high and had copper toes to insure long wear. Needless to say, these boots were not made for speed or too much comfort. Chilblains were the regular winter complaint, as a result of the cold feet that went with the cowhide boots. The advent of rubber boots and socks which came into general wear in the late eighteen nineties changed this situation.

Contrary to Morrow's hopes and ambitions, Ratho did not continue to grow. Out of the few houses that were built in those early days near the store, none now remain except the brick dwelling opposite the store, which was built by Thomas Allshire, a local carpenter and tradesman. One of the several buildings which has long since disappeared was the famous Blue Dog Hotel, situated across the road from Morrow's Store next to the house just mentioned above. It was owned and operated by a Mr. & Mrs. Hughes, a Welsh family, and, like most places of its kind, in those early days, appears to have been very well patronized. It had a large room upstairs where dancing and other events were held. The license for operating this hotel was some years later cancelled and, from this time on, the building apparently fell into disuse and decay.

This story is told concerning some of the patrons

of the Blue Dog who frequently stayed rather late:

One night the wife of one of the patrons became anxious about her "guid man" and walked about two miles to investigate. Someone in the inn gave the alarm that they were being watched by someone on the outside. Lights went out, and all became quiet. When the woman in question reached home, she found her husband in bed quite comfortable and was greeted by the remark, "Why Maggie where have you been at this hour of the night?"

The store across from the Blue Dog continued to prosper and has remained an important part of the life of the community over a long period of years. No doubt part of its early popularity centred around the fact that it served as Post Office following the construction of the Buffalo and Goderich Branch of the Grand Trunk Railway. A flag station was erected just east of the sideroad at Ratho where incoming mail for Ratho was thrown off, and outgoing mail handed on by the postmaster as the train went through. This system was later improved by hanging the outgoing mailbags from a pole where they were caught by a fixture extending from the mail car as it went by. This method of bygone days disappeared when the advent of rural mail delivery about 1908 eliminated many rural post offices. Ratho was one of those eliminated.

Like most country stores of past generations, the brick store, even though it was no longer a Post Office,

became a gathering place, in the evenings, for many of the young men and older men of the community who came and sat around the stove on nailkegs and boxes. What they talked about is not recorded, but it was told of George Steedsman who operated the store for a number of years that he supplied the entertainment by spinning yarns of his own experiences and other early happenings. Some of the boys present figured that, according to the time George Steedsman was supposed to have engaged in different occupations, he must be at least one hundred and forty years old.

The high hopes of Mr. Morrow that Ratho would one day grow into a town of considerable size were shared by several of the early settlers who took up farms in the community, as is evidenced by the action taken when news of the coming of the railroad was received. While there may have been others, the following are known to have particular interest in the development of the proposed town: Charles Foster who owned the north half of Lot 7, Concession 11; Thomas Peat, the south half of Lot 7, Concession 12; David Brash, the north half of Lot 7, Concession 12; T. Sellers, the south half of Lot 6, Concession 12; Mr. Elliott evidently owned the north half of Lot 6, Concession 12.

These men, encouraged by the passage of the railroad through their immediate community, proceeded to have a Provincial Land Surveyor, William Smith, survey a portion of the above-mentioned lands to be set out in lots and streets. The township road between Lots 6 and 7 was

The above store was built at Upper Ratho by Mr. Morrow about 1857. It served also as a Post Office until 1908. It was operated for a number of years by George Steedsman and was later owned and operated by George Deeton.

This stone cottage on the southwest corner of Lower Ratho, now owned by Fred Gow, was originally owned by James Kerr and operated as a General Store and Shoe Shop.

The above building on the northwest corner of Lower Ratho, at present the home of Mr. and Mrs. James Pettigrew, was formerly owned by Nicholas Smith and operated as a Wagon Shop. It had a ramp on the front by which buggies and wagons could be taken to the second storey.

The above building is the Forester's Hall situated west of the corner at Lower Ratho on Concession 12. Until recently this hall was the centre for many and varied community activities.

taken as the basis from which to operate. This road through the survey was named King Street. Running parallel with this, and two hundred and sixty-four feet west, was James Street. West of this Street one hundred and sixty-five feet was the boundary of the survey. Five hundred yards north of the south boundary of Lot 7 was John Street. This block consisted of sixteen double lots varying in size from 66 ft. to 96 ft. in frontage and all being 132 ft. in depth. North from John Street was Bank Street. North from John Street and angling across the railroad was to have been River Street. Six lots north of River was Baird Street. West of this, running north and south, was Hughes Street and parallel to Hughes, 230 ft. to the east, was Burns Street. Ten lots north of Baird Street was Concession 13, to be called Galt Street. On the east side of King Street, and parallel to it, was Victoria Street extending north to the railroad and lined with 27 lots. 165 ft. east to Victoria Street was the east boundary of the survey also running north to the railroad. North of the railroad, the survey extended somewhat farther east to what was Elm Street and again as far north as Concession 13. Lots north of the railroad in the vicinity of Elm Street were again of varying sizes.

The map of the above survey was printed at the Gazeteer Office in Woodstock on or about May 2nd, 1857.

Today, in 1963, when only one of the original houses and the store remain in this area, it may be a little difficult to realize something of the enthusiasm that prompted these early settlers to undertake this project, an enthusiasm

which went so far as to attempt to actually promote the sale of lots by public auction, a copy of which sale bill appears below:

Sale of Lots
IN THE VILLAGE OF
RATHO
This Property will be sold by
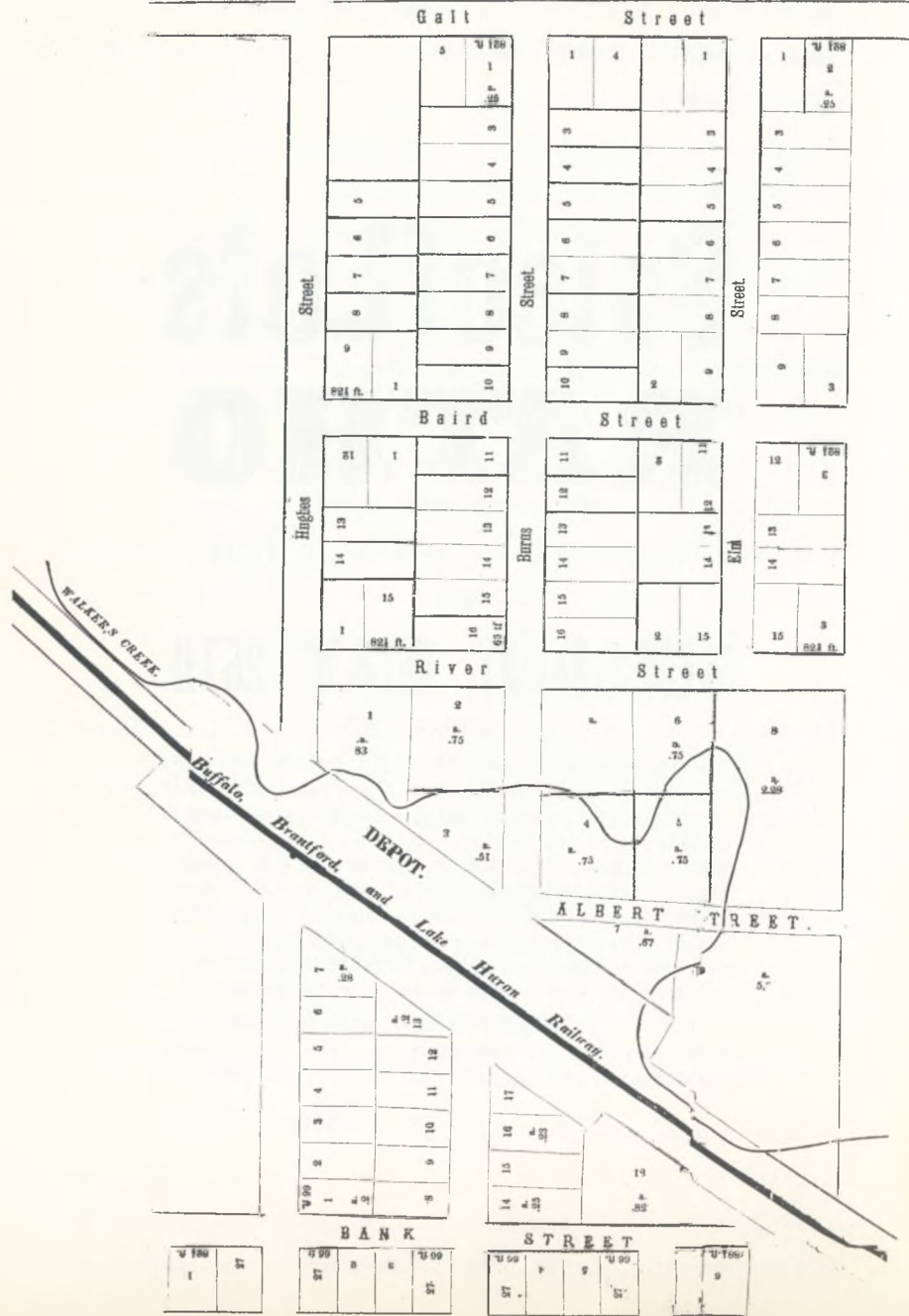## PUBLIC AUCTION,
ON
TUESDAY, MAY 26TH,
AT 12 O'CLOCK NOON

It is situated on the line of the Buffalo and Lake Huron Railway in the Township of Blandford, County of Oxford, and from its being located a considerable distance from any village or town of importance on that line of railway and in the heart of a splendid country being possessed too of other natural advantages, it is certain to become a town of considerable extent. The cars will stop at the place on the day of the sale for the convenience of intending purchasers and Refreshments will be provided on the ground.

Terms of Sale: one fifth down or approved notes at three months: the remainder in four equal annual instalments with interest on the unpaid principal.
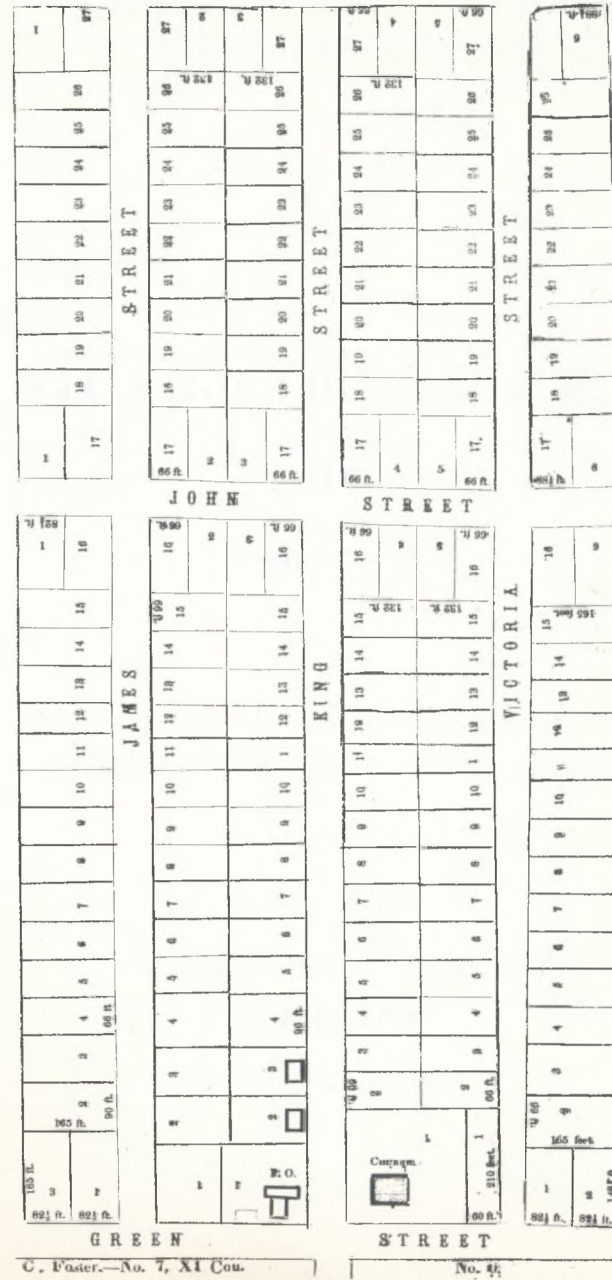
Chas. E. Foster

XIII Con.

Galt Street

Baird Street

River Street

ALBERT STREET.

BANK STREET

WALKER'S CREEK.

Buffalo, Brantford, and Lake Huron Railway.

DEPOT.

Hughes Street

Burns Street

Elm Street

NORTH SECTION — RATHO

T. Peel.—No. 7, XII Con.

JOHN STREET

GREEN STREET

JAMES STREET

KING STREET

VICTORIA STREET

P. O.

Curragm.

C. Foster.—No. 7, XI Con.

No. 4;

SOUTH SECTION — RATHO

The sales bill was evidently accompanied by a map of the survey which was headed as follows:

MAP

of

TOWN AND VILLAGE LOTS

at

RATHO

in the Township of Blandford, County of Oxford, the property of Messrs. Peat, Elliot, and Sellers.

— • — • — • —

William Smith

PROVINCIAL LAND SURVEYOR
WOODSTOCK

May 2nd, 1857

Evidently the Auction Sale did not prove too successful as there is no record of any lots being sold or evidence of any further action following the survey. One must not label the men concerned, however, as dreamers, since they were doing what numerous other early settlers who were practical men were doing in other areas at this period of Ontario's History. Fate and circumstances decreed that their plans should not mature. While other villages have grown into towns and cities, it has been the fate of Ratho to disappear. In the present period of time, it is not difficult to find reasons why this hamlet was not destined to grow. These reasons were, however, not so evident in the year 1857.

PART THREE

RAILROADS

The coming of the railways into Canada and indeed into the whole of North America has been a major factor in the development and progress of the municipality, the province, and the nation. The huge influx of immigrants into the open spaces of Canada in the East and, a generation later, into the vast prairies of the West has multiplied our population four times in three-quarters of a century. Blandford Township has played its part in this expansion. Being part of an inland county, Blandford has been fortunate in the service rendered by railways which brought in many of the necessities of life and carried to market much of the surplus produced.

The Grand Trunk Railway, entering at Concession 1 and extending southwesterly into Woodstock, served the southern part of the township well. The Credit Valley Railway built a line from Toronto to Chatham which commenced operations in 1879. This Company was encouraged by bonuses given by the townships through which it ran. These bonuses were raised by taxation on properties within the municipalities and extended over a period of years. In Blandford, the bonus amounted to approximately $5.00 yearly on a good 100 acre farm. We learn that, four years after

commencing to operate, the Credit Valley Railway became part of the Canadian Pacific Railway Company. This railway entered and passed through the 6th Concession of Blandford and crossed the Thames River into East Zorra at Innerkip. The company built a station at the townline on Lot 1, Concession 6, which was operated largely as a flag station and called, by the settlers in the area, "Blandford Station".

In the year 1857, the Buffalo and Lake Huron commonly called the Buffalo and Goderich branch of the Grand Trunk Railway entered Blandford at the 10th Concession in the Village of Bright and ran in a northwesterly direction through the township. This railway, serving a large district, operated four passenger trains daily and many freight trains. In addition to servicing Ratho and Bright, this railway gave service to the village of Plattsville which lies 4 miles away to the northeast. In early days, there were, in Plattsville, two large flour mills, a furniture factory, and a buggy factory which shipped goods and received supplies entirely over this line. Bright was sometimes called "Plattsville Station". Plattsville, for many years, got its mail from this station.

During its first years, the railway station at Bright was open twenty-four hours daily and employed four men. There was a Station Master, a Night Operator, a Baggageman, and a Mailman. The writer well remembers meeting Mr. Wm. Bond on the street one morning in 1907 when he remarked, "Fifty years ago today at 3 o'clock in the after-

noon the first engine crossed the Townline here in the village.'' Mr. Bond didn't keep a diary but had a very retentive memory. As has been previously mentioned, this is the line which ran through the village of Ratho.

The locomotives in early days were fired with wood which was placed beside the tracks in great piles. This helped the settlers by providing a market for the unwanted timber which otherwise would be piled in heaps and burned.

Mention should be made of the huge water tanks along the railways, located at stations where a good supply of water was attainable. These large round tanks were built on open tower-like structures high enough that the water was fed into the locomotive by gravity system. At Bright, many locomotives obtained their water from a tank supplied by Ambrose Winters, tankman, who spent his life servicing these locomotives.

The "woodburners" were later converted into "coalburners''. It was interesting to see the great clouds of black smoke belching from the smoke stacks of these engines, and to hear the puffing as the trains started moving up the grade northwestward from Bright towards Ratho. All this is now in the past as diesel engines have replaced them. Today, in 1963, few trains pass over this line.

PART FOUR

CHURCHES

MENNONITE CHURCH
(North Half, Lot 2, Concession 9)

The original Crown Deed for Lot 2, Concession 9 is dated November 4th, 1846. A payment of 87 pounds, 10 shillings was made by Christian Shantz. One acre on the 10th line was set aside for a church building and cemetery. The church, of log construction, 35 feet by 25 feet, was built sometime between 1846 and 1854. Records indicate that some meetings had been held as early as 1839 presumably in some of the homes of the community.

The family names of original members included such names as Basinger, Neurschwander, Strickler, Miller, Baer, Stauffer, Bingeman, and Rosenberger. By 1870, the membership had grown to nearly one hundred members. There was never, at any time, a resident minister, but Jacob Bretz who was ordained at Hespeler in 1839 moved to Plattsville and arranged to look after services in this church also. Assisting in these services were men like Menno Cressman, Bishop Amos Cressman, and Joseph Nahrgang. For some years, services were held monthly. In 1892, the Mennonite Conference decided that services would only be held during

the six summer months. By 1904, the congregational work had dwindled so much that Moses Cressman was authorized by Conference to sell the church which was falling into disrepair. There were evidently no buyers and it was about 1910 that Ezra Cressman bought it for $25.00.

Mr. Curtis Cressman states that, to the best of his knowledge, the property involving the cemetery was deeded to a local board of trustess who have been doing a fine job of caring for it. The tombstones in the cemetery record many of the names of those who were interested and took an active part in the life of the congregation in the past. The members of this congregation evidently belonged to the "Old Order" Mennonites who, on their arrival in this country as pioneers, made certain arrangements with, and were granted certain concessions by the government.

CHESTERFIELD CHURCH

Chesterfield was given its name by George Baird whom we have previously mentioned in connection with the history of Bright Village. He was the first to keep a Post Office, and to open a store in the community on the northwest corner of the Brown farm opposite the church. The first congregation in this area met on Sundays at the home of John Knox, Lot 24, Concession 14, Blenheim Township. This mission was served by a minister from Ayr and West Dumfries. Since most of the families in this area were Scotch, the congregation was Presbyterian becoming United Church when Presbyterian and Methodist churches joined forces.

There is no record of when meetings commenced, but the church records show that a petition with 42 names was presented to the Presbytery of Flamboro requesting that a congregation be organized. This petition was accepted and a congregation was constituted on the 10th of February, 1844, by Flamboro Presbytery. At this time, a log church was built close to where the present church now stands.

This building served the congregation for a ten-year period until the present brick church was erected. (Dimensions 40' x 55').

In 1906, a furnace and new seats were installed and, a few years later, a half-sized basement was built under the present church. Provision for the comfort of the horses

was provided in 1872 by the erection of a long line of sheds which were removed when automobiles replaced horses about 50 years later.

In 1868, a manse 40' x 30' was built south of the church and this served the families of Rev. Wm. Robertson and Rev. W. H. Johnson until 1930 when the manse was sold and a mausoleum erected on the site. It is interesting to note, following the induction of the first minister, Rev. Robert Rogers, in 1850, that, for 80 years, the congregation was served by only four ministers:

Rev. Robt. Rogers 1850—54,
Rev. Jos. Scott 1854—59,
Rev. Wm. Robertson 1859—91,
Rev. W. H. Johnson 1892—1930.

The last resting place of those ministers with the exception of Rev. Rogers is the cemetery adjacent to the church. This is also true for the majority of those who worked for and worshipped in the church in past years. The cemetery has been enlarged on different occasions and has become a community burying-ground although still owned by the congregation. It is exceedingly well maintained, and is a credit to the community.

Some resolutions passed by the congregation over a period of years might be recorded here.

April 16th, 1855: Moved by Wm. Steedsman; seconded by James Sinclair "That the deed be always in the name of the congregation provided that the property shall not be taken away from connection with the United Presbyterian Church without the consent of two-thirds of the then existing members".

Nov. 2nd, 1855: Moved by Thos. Bradnoch; seconded by John Murray "That the committee make a present of a good pocket bible to each of the three masons as a mark of esteem for the faithful manner in which they have performed their services." (Construction of the church).

Dec. 31st, 1869: Moved by George Middlemas; seconded by Wm. Ferguson "That a soiree in aid of the building fund be gotten up on the occasion of Mr. Robertson's ordination. The young ladies to bake cakes and wait on the tables." (The tickets for this social gathering sold at 25 cents and the proceeds amounted to $91.60.)

During these years, the congregation was led in singing by the Precentor, Mr. James (Jimmy) Henderson, at a salary of $50.00. In 1870, the minister's salary was raised to $700.00; in 1880, to $900.00; in 1882, to $1000.00.

In 1876, the Hymnal was adopted by vote – 162 for, 10 against, 10 neutral. Previous to this, 'Songs and Paraphrases' were used entirely in the song service. At this time, the membership of the congregation was 232. In 1887, the first organ, the 'Kist O Whustles', was purchased, ending the era of the Precentor. Walter Lamberton was engaged as organist at a salary of $50.00 per annum. Mr. Lamberton, a recent immigrant from Scotland, supposedly a remittance man, was a wonderful organist. The office of organist, since that time, has been held by three people: Agnes Dalziel, Agnes Harvey, and Mrs. Clarence Hallman, all of whom have been very faithful in the discharge of their duties.

June 16th, 1946, was a special occasion to mark the One Hundredth Anniversary of the founding of the Chesterfield congregation. The very Rev. Jesse Arnop, Moderator of the United Church, was minister for the special church services. Invitations were sent to any person known who had been connected with the church in the past. The result was a large attendance with people coming from the Pacific Coast, prairies, and points east. Rev. Douglas Ramsay, an old member from Edmonton, was guest minister the following Sunday. An old-fashioned Soiree or Tea Meeting also marked the occasion.

RATHO PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

In the year 1852, Mr. Thomas Sellers gave a lot in the southwest corner of his farm, Lot 6, Concession 12, to the Ratho congregation for a church and cemetery. A church was built the same year at a cost of eight hundred dollars. The building was a frame structure 40' x 60'. In 1874, ten feet were added and all was covered with a brick veneer. This building served the congregation until 1952 when a splendid full-sized basement was constructed under the church, adding greatly to the comfort and convenience of the congregation. (This was the year of the Hundredth Anniversary of the building of the church.) In 1880, sheds were built on the west side of the building for the horses while services were in session. In the meantime, a manse for the minister was not overlooked. The first manse was built on Lot 9, Concession 8 of the Township of Blandford near the roadway on the high bank of the Thames River. It was built shortly after 1852. This was part way between the congregations of Ratho and Innerkip which were under one charge since the forming of the congregation in Ratho.

At the annual meeting in 1864, it was decided to build a manse at Ratho. It was finished in 1865 only to burn down in 1871, but was rebuilt again the same year. This manse was sold in 1892 after which the ministers lived in Innerkip in the present manse built in 1891. The present congregation of Ratho comprises, to a considerable extent, the descendants of those who were in the congregation in

earlier years but such names as Brash, Steedsman, Hall, Sellers, Sylvester, Decker, Dickie, Herbertson, Thomson, Patton, Hastings, Cowing, Tacket, McIntyre, Cameron, Kerr, Brown, Smith, Davidson, Horne, Lovel, Patrick, Nichols, Adams, Elliott, Hogarth, Bruce, and Blair are no longer heard except in remembrance. The majority of these names may be seen on the tombstones in the cemetery adjoining the church. This cemetery has been enlarged by a gift of land given by the Sellers Family.

Rev. Archie Blair, a very capable minister, son of a pioneer family, was a frequent Anniversary speaker during his life-time. In 1891, the Women's Missionary Society was organized by Mrs. (Rev.) Peter Straith. The Mission Band was organized in 1925. The Sunday School which met only

in the summer months, a usual practise of country congregations, was started in 1881. Ministers who have served throughout the years are as follows:

Rev. Andrew Tolmie (1852–62),
Rev. Finlay McCraig (1864–70),
Rev. J. M. Aull (1871–80),
(It was said "He shook them well over the bottomless pit.")
Rev. Wm. McKinley (1882–89),
Rev. Peter Straith (1890–1903),
("Peter Great-Heart")
Rev. Robert McCullough (1903–13),
Rev. N. Stevenson (1913–19),
Rev. H. Bolingbrook (1920–23),
Rev. W. S. Wright (1924–39),
Rev. W. A. Kincaid (1940–48),
Rev. J. P. Schissler (1950–63).

BRIGHT CHURCH

This was a Methodist Church until the time of Union when it became part of the United Church of Canada. Although the early records of this church are not complete, there is proof that there was a Methodist congregation in Bright as early as 1865. At this time, Bright was part of the Blenheim Circuit along with Washington, Mount Carmel, Drumbo, Wolverton, Plattsville, and Wilmot. Rev. R. J. Foreman was the minister. In 1873, Bright became part of the Washington Circuit and, in 1875, was an appointment on the Plattsville Mission. The minister, in 1875, was Rev. J. C. Stevenson who resided in Plattsville. William Green and John Riesberry represented Bright on the Board. (The writer remembers John Riesberry having 400 bushels of wheat which he sold for $2.00 per bushel during the years of the Crimean War (1850–1854). Mr. Riesberry said he was never hard up for money after that.) In 1886, Plattsville and Washington formed one circuit and Bright and Bethel formed a separate circuit. Rev. C. W. Cousins became the first minister of the new Bright and Bethel charge. William Wilson, George Thomson (cheesemaker), James Reid (saw-miller), Joseph Evans (farmer), Adam Fleischauer (wagon-maker), R. E. Miller, and Edward Wilson (merchant) were members of the Board.

(It should be noted that the Bethel mentioned here is Bethel in Wilmot Township not Bethel in the south end of Blandford.)

The first Methodist church building at Bright was built in 1865 on the south side of James Street. In recent years, this building has been enlarged and is now the Community Hall. At the opening of this church, Rev. R. J. Foreman presented a Bible which is still in use in the Bright Sunday School. A tea-meeting was held to mark the occasion and circuit expenses were approximately $750 per year. The names of the Trustees were John Riesberry, John Wilson, William Green, William Stadden, Edward Wilson, William Wilson, Richard Hewitt, and James Reid.

On February 3, 1892, it was decided to build a new church on land which was purchased from William Scott for $100. The committee in charge were Edward Wilson, William Milburn, and Joseph Evans. The corner-stone was laid by

Mrs. Cousins, wife of a former minister. A splendid brick building with a gallery and full basement was completed that same year at a cost of $5500. Sheds were also erected to shelter the horses and buggies which were used by those attending the services. The membership, at this time, was 126 persons. Three special services were held on the opening Sunday followed by guest speakers for several Sundays.

The following set of rules was placed at the entrance to this new church:

1. Persons are not allowed to loiter in the lobby or around the doors of the church.
2. Passing in and out of the church during services will not be tolerated.
3. Gentlemen are requested to remove their hats upon entering the church during prayers.
4. Tobacco-spitting, any conversation or unseemly conduct in the church or on the premises is strictly forbidden.

In the early days of the congregation and for some time after the building of the new church, the Communion Service was known as the "love-feast". Bread and water were passed to the people in the pews. Following this, the members went to the altar-rail and knelt while the minister served bread and wine. The water and wine were served in a china bowl.

In 1894, the first parsonage which had been built on

Murray Street was sold and a two-storey house built by Mr. Cameron, corner-store merchant, was purchased for $2450.

The following extract taken from a copy of the "Bright Enterprise" published on January 30, 1896 indicates something of the extent of the weekly activity which centred around Bright Methodist Church:

"Methodist, Bright — Rev. W. N. Vollick, Pastor.
Services at 10:30 A.M. and 7:30 P.M.
Sabbath School at 2:30 P.M., an orchestra in attendance to lead the singing.
Prayer meeting on Tuesday evening;
Bible Class, Thursday evening.
Epworth League on Friday evening, everybody welcome."

The first couple to be married in the new church were Mr. and Mrs. James Cassidy, parents of Mr. L. M. Cassidy. The wedding took place on February 20, 1895 and the couple were presented with a Bible by the Trustees.

Through the years, the work of the congregation has prospered and gone forward supported largely by the efforts of organized groups and faithful workers. In the Sunday-School, held since the early days of the congregation, two persons have given very faithful service, William Wilson who moved to British Columbia, and Wilson Glaves who served as superintendent for 45 years.

The Epworth League (Y.P.U.) was organized by

Reverend W. H. Garnham on October 1st, 1890. John Hamilton, clerk in the corner store, was the first president, and Daniel Burke, a public school teacher, was secretary. The Ladies Aid was organized in 1900 with Mrs. W. B. Wilson, a devoted worker, as president. The Women's Missionary Society was organized in 1929 with Mrs. O.R. Francis as president. This was followed by mission band and baby-band. The young women organized the Dorcas Society in 1938 to assist in church work.

In November, 1942, the congregation observed the fiftieth anniversary of the opening of the present church. Reverend W.H. Garnham, minister when the church was built, Reverend B. Eyre, a former pastor, Reverend W. H. Hagelstein, a former pastor, and present pastor Reverend J. Ure Stewart took the services.

Ministers who served the church for the 100 year period between 1865 and 1965 were as follows:

1865 — Rev. R. J. Foreman, Rev. John H. Heppel,
1866 — Rev. R. J. Foreman, Rev. John Smiley, B.A.,
1867 — Rev. Wm. Ames, Rev. George Ferguson,
1868 — Rev. Wm. Ames, Rev. E. Richardson,
1869 — Rev. Wm. Ames, Rev. Thos. M. Campbell,
1870 — Rev. Wm. W. Shepherd, Rev. John E. Lancely,
1871 — Rev. Wm. W. Shepherd, Rev. D. W. Thompson,
1872 — Rev. Wm. W. Shepherd, Rev. Henry Berry,
1873 — Rev. S. Tucker,
1875 — Rev. S. Tucker, Rev. Wm. W. Sparling,
1875–1877 — Rev. John C. Stevenson,

1878–1879 — Rev. David Auld,
1879–1880 — Rev. John Fisher,
1880–1882 — Rev. F. H. Sanderson,
1882–1883 — Rev. Thos. S. Pearson,
1883–1884 — Rev. Thos. R. Clark, Rev. E. J. Clark,
1886–1889 — Rev. Chas. W. Cousins,
1889–1892 — Rev. Wm. H. Garnham, B.A., B.D.,
1892–1893 — Rev. T. W. Kelly, B.A.,
1893–1896 — Rev. Wm. N. Vollick,
1896–1897 — Rev. John T. Smith,
1897–1899 — Rev. J. H. Dyke,
1899–1902 — Rev. H. S. Dougall, B.A.,
1902–1904 — Rev. F. W. Thompson, B.A.,
1904–1905 — Rev. John Stewart,
1905–1908 — Rev. H. Brand,
1908–1911 — Rev. John E. Peters, M.A.,
1911–1914 — Rev. N. A. Hurlbut,
1914–1916 — Rev. S. E. Couch,
1916–1917 — Rev. George Lounds,
1917–1921 — Rev. B. Eyre, B.A., B.D.,
1921–1926 — Rev. H. S. Fiddes,
1926–1930 — Rev. I. A. McKelvey,
1930–1936 — Rev. P. S. Banes, B.A.,
1936–1942 — Rev. H. W. Hagelstein, B.A.,
1942–1947 — Rev. J. Ure Stewart, B.A.,
1947–1951 — Rev. W. D. Clark, B.A.,
1951–1955 — Rev. H. Watts,
1955–1958 — Rev. Wm. Welsh,
1958–1961 — Mr. E. J. Burr,

1961–1963 – Rev. Wm. Summerell,

1963 – Mr. Cyprian Marzec.

BETHEL CHURCH

The Church at Bethel in the south of Blandford was built about 1872 on the same Lot 6, Concession 3, as the school, part of Enoch Baker's farm. It was a frame structure which was later bricked up. Some time later, the brick in the front of the church fell out and it was reinforced with steel rods through the ceiling of the church.

First families in the congregation were:

(Bethel East) Hugh Ferguson, Angus Fraser, Ed Hersee, Nat Baker, John Nancekivell, Paul Bond, Thomas Dunn, J. L. Overholt.

(Bethel West) Enoch Baker, John White, James Morrow, Michael Townsend, John Fitch.

(Bethel North) Absolom Taylor, William Smith, Thomas Millar.

The ministers who served this church were: Mr. Ames, T. R. Clark (his wife was noted for her singing, being a good soloist), Thomas Voaden, A. B. Millar (a former teacher at Bethel School), Mr. Amey, and Mr. Jackson, a lay preacher.

Bethel, for a period of years, was part of Eastwood

BETHEL CHURCH

Circuit of the Methodist Church and later, as a United Church, became part of Innerkip Circuit.

Changes of property-holders in the district brought in families of different faiths and Bethel Church, like many others in rural communities, was closed and the building has been demolished.

PART FIVE

SCHOOLS

SCHOOL SECTION # 1 (BOND'S CORNERS)

In 1832, there were only four schoolhouses in Oxford County: one in each of the Townships of East, West, and North Oxford, and one in Blenheim.

Bond's Corners School must have been one of the first schools organized in the Blandford area since it was situated on the Governor's Road in the line of travel followed by incoming settlers. In addition, it was but two miles from the Village of Woodstock.

Sometime between 1835 and 1840, Giles Chambers obtained from the Government, the first grant of land in this area, namely Lot 13, Concession 2. It is presumed that, very shortly thereafter, Mr. Chambers and some members of the Bond Family were instrumental in getting the first school started in this district. Records indicate that a schoolhouse was erected in 1855 and, by 1880, there were 107 pupils. During this period, Dick Costain was the teacher, and Stratton Rowell taught singing lessons to the young people of the community on certain evenings in the week. Although conditions were crowded and supplies meagre, Bonds turned out some very famous and well-educated men

PUPILS OF S.S. No. 1 BLANDFORD AND S.S. No. 2 EAST OXFORD (BOND'S) — 1912
FRONT ROW: From left to right — Earl Pratt, Tom Izzard, Bert Lockhart, Fred Earl (with slate), Godfrey Shelby, Joe Laing, John Lockhart, Jack McGhee.
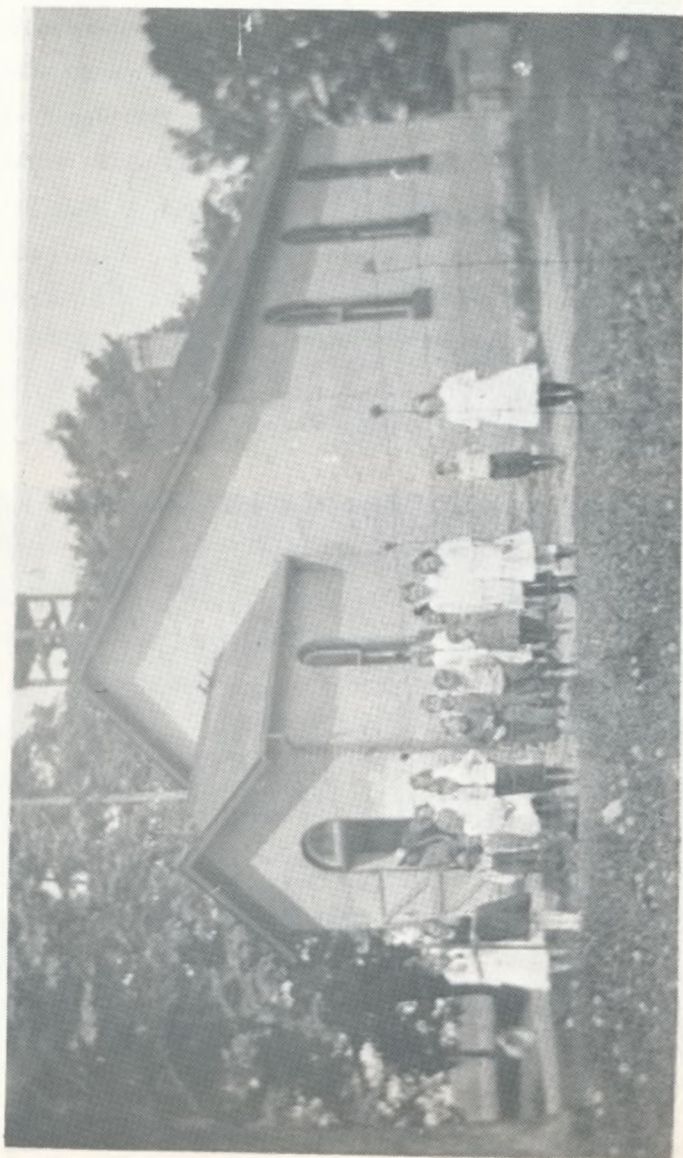2nd ROW: — Reg. Foster, Daisy Molyneaux, Win Davis, O. Wilkinson, Katharine McGhee, Vera Locke, Gladys Wilkinson, Winnifred Foster, Clarence Davis, Jim Virtue, Harry Locke.
3rd ROW (sitting): — Rena Balls, Sadie McGhee, Gladys Davis, Ruby Balls, Olive Molyneaux, Elsie Foster, Evelyn Davis, Dorothy Chester, Roy Adams, Hilton Virtue.
4th ROW (standing): — Colin West, Percy Woodall, Gilbert Adams, Mabel Costello, Marjorie Costello, Hazel Davis, Mary Locke, Reg. West, Carl Shelby.
5th ROW: — Lloyd Balls, Earnest Shelby, Jim McMahon, Mary Costello, Olive Cherritt, Mary Molyneaux, Jane Appleton, Miriam Wilkinson.
TOP ROW: — Ann Hutcheson, Miss Lucy Kenny (teacher), Violet Balls.

among whom were Rev. W. West, Rev. Thomas Bell, Rev. Thomas Symington, Rev. W. Amos, Dr. Thomas West, Dr. Wilfred, Judge W. West, and others. In 1900, land was purchased from H. P. Wilford to make the schoolgrounds the required one acre and the original school was remodelled at a cost of $500.00. The work was barely completed when a transient, spending the night there, set fire to the building about 5 a.m., completely destroying it. He had intended to commit suicide, but gave up the idea when things became too hot. He then fled to Woodstock and gave himself up to the police. Meanwhile, the children received an education in various places until another school was erected in 1907, on the present site.

Over the years, attendance increased and, about 1950, a second single-room school was built in the yard a few feet north of the one erected in 1907. This was followed, a very few years later, by another room built south of the main school; a somewhat unique but not necessarily practical arrangement in school building.

S.S. No. 2 BLANDFORD (BETHEL SCHOOL) — JUNE 1920

SCHOOL SECTION # 2 (BETHEL)

The first school in this section was built on the southeast corner of Lot 6, Concession 3, beside the Methodist Church, on the Enoch Baker farm. Mr. John Overholt whose memory goes back to 1870 remembers three trustees in the persons of Richard Kipp, Richard Robinson, and Michael Overholt. Among the early teachers were R. D. Perry, Maggie Hotson, (Sister of Dr. Hotson a well-known figure in the Innerkip district), Mrs. Golding, Joe Edmonds, Ed Shoemaker, Robert Darling, and Hattie MacKay.

During winter months, over 100 pupils attended. It was customary for the older boys in the area to remain at home and help on the farm during the summer, but to attend school in the winter months.

This school served the community until the beginning of the present century when a modern brick school was built on the northeast corner of Lot 7, Concession 2, in 1934. About 1953, an addition was built to this school due to the influx of tobacco growers who settled in this district.

In the early days of the section, a Literary Society was formed and meetings held in the school. Debates alternated with musical programmes with people from Shower's Corners, Bond's Corners, and other neighbouring communities participating. Evidently a very fine spirit existed in pioneer days in Bethel Community.

In days gone by, communities tended to be more

S.S. No. 3 BLANDFORD

BACK ROW: Left to Right — Fred Chesney, Robert Chesney, Florence Callan, Maud Zinn, Eva Cudmore, Martha Chesney, Isabell Tremble, Jim Chesney, Edward Cudmore.
MIDDLE ROW: — Dorothy Smallman, Ruth Zinn, Mabel Zinn, Muriel Burbank, Miss Smith (Teacher), Mabel Rowell, Agnes Sim, May Chesney, Stella Chesney.

closely knit and interests more local. The school was frequently the centre for community gatherings. Debating Societies were by no means uncommon and young and old took a keen interest in these verbal contests. Many a local politician got his start in the school debating league.

SCHOOL SECTION # 3

Prior to 1864, pupils from Innerkip district and a part of Blandford lying north of Innerkip attended a school situated on the 18th line of East Zorra opposite the west end of Concession 8 in Blandford. In the early 1860's, nearly 150 pupils attended. This condition resulted in consideration being given to the building of a new school-house.

As was not uncommon in such circumstances, an argument arose over the location for the new school building. Residents in the north end of the area wanted the school built near their homes. Others farther south wanted the school built near Innerkip which was now a village. Feelings became so intense that the existing school was discontinued. The north families went to Ratho School, S.S. # 4 Blandford, and the south families in and near Innerkip held school in a hall in the Village of Innerkip.

After considerable argument, each faction decided to build its own school. Consequently, a section was formed and a school known as S.S. # 3 was built on the southwest corner of Lot 6, Concession 8. The other faction decided

to build on the McLean Farm a little north of the village, the site for this school costing $6.00. This section was labelled S.S. # 10 East Zorra. The S.S. # 3 schoolhouse in Blandford was built of stone and served the section until a new red brick building with full basement was erected in 1908 farther south on the sideroad. This building, in addition to being used as a school, has been used by Blandford ratepayers for many years for the purpose of Municipal Nominations and Elections.

SCHOOL SECTION # 4 (RATHO SCHOOL)

S.S. # 4 Blandford was first known as S.S. # 7. It was organized in 1846 and included the families of settlers in the north part of the Township, the Village of Bright, and those south of Bright. As has been previously mentioned, Blandford and Blenheim Townships became in 1837 part of the District of Brock. In 1851, the Village of Woodstock was separated from the Township of Blandford, and 20,000 acres were alienated from the Clergy Reserves in 1854. School Sections began to develop about this time. It will be noted that S.S. # 4 Blandford was one of the earliest sections to be formed in the Township.

The Secretary-Treasurer's report for 1850 is the first to record grants for school purposes: a Legislative Grant of £6, S13, d2, and a Municipal Grant for the same amount.

In addition to these grants, a gift of land was received on which to build "the old log school". The expenses of building and operating were met by a levy on the people whose children attended the school, either by value of property or a charge per child.

In 1857, Abraham Bean was paid £12, S10 for a school site. This was a half-acre of land on the south part of Lot 6, Concession 11. A two-roomed school was built about 200 yards east of the crossroad and, later, a frame teacher's house was built on the southeast corner of the lot, at a cost of $304.89. The senior teacher, John Robinson, paid $24.00 rent per year for use of this house. Miss Janet Rogers was the second teacher at the time.

In 1878, a well was drilled but the water proved to be very unpleasant to the taste. In connection with this well, the Secretary recorded this humorous incident in the minutes of April 20, 1883. "Trustees met at the school pump, it being out of order. Agreed to draw it out. D. Peat to act as Engineer. We lifted and twisted the thing round and up over the Master's house, and pressed a passerby to assist us. At last we got it out and took a part of it apart and left it laying by the fence. Adjournment to wash up."

The following is a record of the business transaction which made the first school possible.
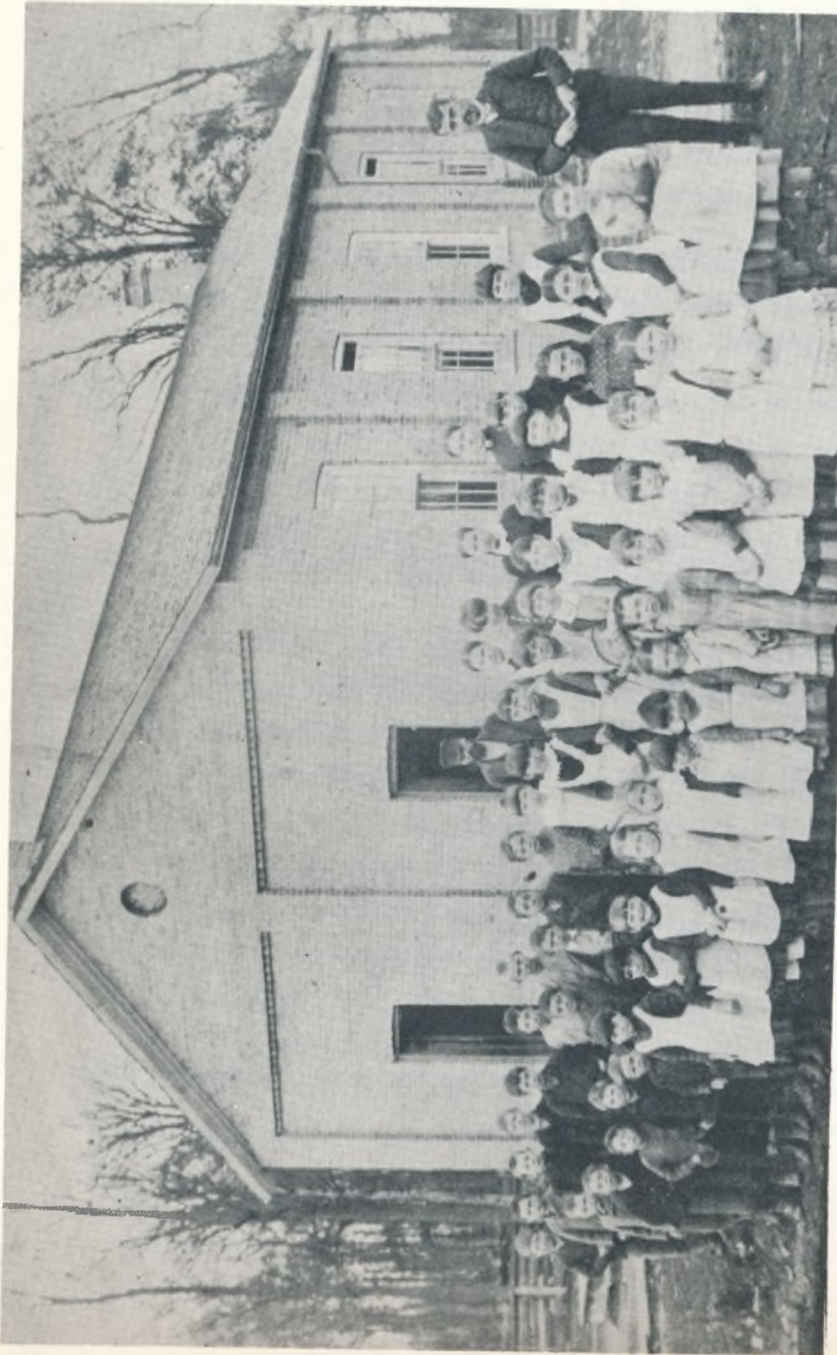
PUPILS OF S.S. No. 4 BLANDFORD (RATHO) – 1887

BACK ROW: At Right – Kate Robson, Mary Hamilton, Nettie Shearer, Belle Robson, Mary J. Hall, Jean Peat, Allan Davidson (Teacher), Thomas Robson (Trustee).

CENTRE ROW: Left to Right – William Vance, Lorne Dryburgh, Roland Smith, George Oliver, Robert Smith, John Hepworth, John Minard, William Pettigrew, Mac Robson, Charles Bean, William Anslow, Maggie Vance, Lottie Peat, Jennie Dryburgh, Emma Batram, Mary Anslow, Maggie Hepworth, Maggie Smith, Barbara Milburn, Sarah Ziegler, Mabel Sylvester, Jean Cochrane.

FRONT ROW: Left to Right – Fred Dryburgh, George Milburn, Norman Hepworth, George Pettit, Wallace Peat, Jessie Milburn, Ellen Pettit, Nettie Bean, Maggie Robson, Amy Shearer, Ethel Milburn, Ida Ziegler, Jessie Oliver, Alice Ziegler, Tena Oliver, Nettie Minard, Janet Landreth, Minnie Borland.

SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 7 OF BLANDFORD

Known all by these presents. That I, Abraham Bean, in perfect soundness of mind and in the Forty-third year of my life and Eighteen Hundred and Forty-Six of the forty-six of the Christian era, do declare before the witnesses whose names are hereunto annexed. To have given of my own free will for the behalf of the School in said district Six Rods of land in the northeast corner of Lot No. 6 of the eleventh concession of Blandford, and do further bind myself, or whoever may possess the said lot hereafter to give right and title to the aforesaid six rods of land free of all expense.

Given under my hand this 12th day of February eighteen hundred forty-six.

WITNESS	PROPRIETOR
Robert Brown	Abraham Bean
Thomas Peat	Susannah Bean
John Burns	(her mark)

-The following notes from the Secretary's book indicate some of the activities and business transactions following 1846:

1846 – School built (log school).

1846–47 Trustees – Robert Brown, John Burns, Thomas Peat.

1847–48 Trustees – James Bell, Joseph Vance, Robert Taylor.

1848–49 Trustees – Joseph Vance, John Baird, Robert Taylor.

1849–50 Trustees – Robert Taylor, John Baird, John Sharrick.

* * * * * * * * * *

1849 – Tax levied by Municipal Council for upkeep of school.

* * * * * * * * * *

1847 – John Gillespie teacher (6 months) £13, S15.

1847 – 48 – William Cavin teacher (6 months) £23, S5.

1848 – Thomas Bradnoch teacher (3 months) £13, S7, d7½.

1848 – Mr. Fisher, Galt stove and pipe
£4, S14, d1.
23½ lbs. nails – S8, d8½.
Abraham Bean, hewing school – S5.

1849 – Thomas Bradnoch teacher
£35, S2, d3.

1851 – July 21 William Oliver teacher
£6, S11, d8.

1852 – William Oliver teacher
£43, S39, d12½.

1853 – Aug. 17 William Oliver teacher
£10, S9, d8.
Aug. 20 William Oliver teacher £20.
Dec. 31 William Oliver teacher
£11, S3, d8.
Dec. 31 William Oliver teacher
£10, S16, d8.

1854 – Aug. Margaret Rogers teacher £52, S10.
Dec. Margaret Rogers teacher £28, S5.

1855 – Mar. 29 Miss Farries teacher £11, S5.
July 30 Mr. Levie Swan teacher £11, S5.
Dec. 31 Daniel Bean teacher until end
of 1857.

The old minute book further shows that, in 1857, the foundation for the school was dug by John Arnott and work on the building commenced. Abraham Bean was paid £12, S10 for the school site. John Robinson and Miss Janet Rogers commenced teaching in 1858 evidently in the new school. In 1859, John Taskett was paid $2.25 for 2 cords of wood.

The following is a copy of an agreement between John Robinson and the Trustees:

"We the undersigned trustees of S. Section No. 4 Blandford do hereby agree to engage John Robinson as teacher at the rate of $400.00 per annum –

We do further agree to let him have the use of the dwelling house adjoining the School House at the rate of $24.00 per annum commencing the 1st of September 1861

Dated this 1st day of January 1862
Samuel D. McMeekin
John Dickie
Alexander Prentice.

Periods of tenure were short and salaries small.

After several meetings and much discussion, a new school was built on the sideroad south of the corner in 1915, the present site of S.S. # 4 Blandford.

It is expedient, at this point, to call attention to a movement which played an important part in the life and activity of many schools in Oxford County during the years between World War I and World War II. The writer refers to School Fairs which began in Blandford Township about 1916 and continued until about 1940.

In Oxford County, each township had its own local School Fair held early in September at some central location. Winners at these township fairs usually competed later at Woodstock Fall Fair. The chief promoter of these local School Fairs was Oxford's Agricultural Representative, Mr. G. R. Green, a most energetic and capable leader.

Contests were held in Public Speaking, First Aid, Singing, and Stock Judging. Pupils displayed exhibits of articles grown and or made. Each school entered a parade and was judged on the basis of marching, costumes, and school-yells.

S.S. # 4 Blandford was the first school in Blandford Township to win not only the Township Championship in Stock-Judging, but also the County Championship at Woodstock Fair. The members of this Championship team were Glen Pettigrew, Douglas Ellis, and Russel Ellis. The author coached the Team.

It is also interesting to note that the last School Fair to be held in Blandford Township was held at S.S. # 4 Blandford.

SCHOOL SECTION # 5 (14th LINE)

S.S. # 5 was organized about 1865. Previous to this, scholars on Concessions 13 and 14 attended Ratho School (S.S. #4), Blink Bonnie (S.S. #1 Blenheim) or the nearest schools in East Zorra or Wilmot Townships. When the section was organized, a log and frame school was erected on the site of the present school. A year later, the board with Benjamin Shantz, as chairman, and John Oliver, secretary, had the school lathed and plastered.

On April 24, 1875, the ratepayers met to consider building a new school but no action was taken. On April 1, 1876, another meeting was held and it was decided to build a new school on the site of the old one. The contract for brick, stonework, and plastering was awarded to F. E. Vanduson of Woodstock. James Hamilton, a local carpenter, was responsible for all carpenter-work, painting and decorating. The ratepayers hauled the brick from Drumbo. John Burns, the third member of the Board, was to oversee construction. Thirty-six double desks were purchased to take the place of old desks and backless benches.

Peter McKay was the first teacher in the new building. He was followed in turn by Simon Robertson and John
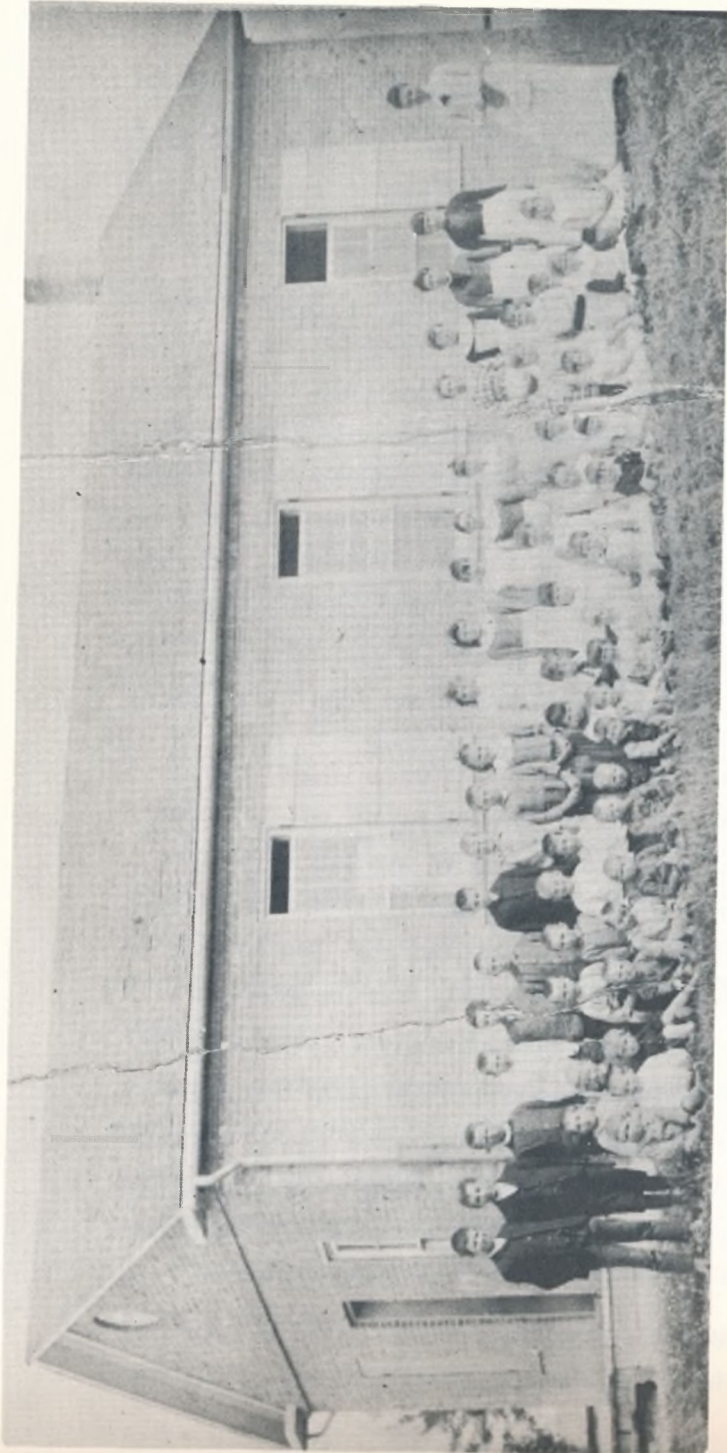
PUPILS OF S.S. No. 5 BLANDFORD (14th LINE) — 1887

BACK ROW: Left to Right — John Brash, Henry Schweitzer, David Ferguson, (unknown), Donald Robertson, George Robertson, James Middlemas, David Bell, Solomon Amacker, Mary Steedsman, Lillian Smith, Agnes Steedsman, Jessie Calder, Barbara Smith, (unknown), Jean Risk, Jean Ferguson, Agnes Brash, May Brash, Miss M. Miller (Teacher)
CENTRE ROW: Left to Right — Henry Roth, Richard Ferguson, William Cudmore, Peter Robertson, John Bell, (unknown), (unknown), Matilda Schweitzer, Jean Henderson, (unknown), Carrie Amacker, Jessie Ferguson, Emily Wright, Adabelle Brown, Rosa Bond.
FRONT ROW: Left to Right — Ed. Schweitzer, W. J. Brown, Wallace Stewart, Robert Bond, Benjamin Roth, John Robertson, James Henderson, Orwell Henderson, James Rinsler, (unknown), Tena Sippel, Ribb Sinclair, Agnes Bell, Emma Calder, Clara Schweitzer, (unknown), Margaret Bond, (unknown), (unknown).

Henderson. The latter became principal of St. Catharines Collegiate and was rather prominent in educational circles in Ontario, having written some texts on education. A local boy, William Armstrong, taught from 1869 to 1877 for a salary between three and four hundred dollars.

At a meeting of ratepayers held during the early years of the section, a resolution was passed instructing the trustees to command the teacher to spend more time on Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, and Spelling as all branches of study beyond these were a grave wrong to the scholars. The teacher had been introducing some History and Geography. In contrast, we read that, in 1937, arrangements were made to include Music and Manual Training. Edwin Fergusson of Plattsville was engaged to give music instruction for at least one hour per week.

The school, erected in 1876, is still in use having been renovated and modernized. Descendants of some of the original settlers still attend this school.

SCHOOL SECTION # 4 BLENHEIM AND # 8 BLANDFORD (BRIGHT SCHOOL)

Previous to 1875, this section had not been organized and the children in the community attended neighbouring schools. Those living on the Tenth, Eleventh, and Twelfth Concessions of Blandford attended Ratho School, (S.S. # 4 Blandford). Those on the Blenheim side of the Townline attended the school on the southwest corner of Lot 21,
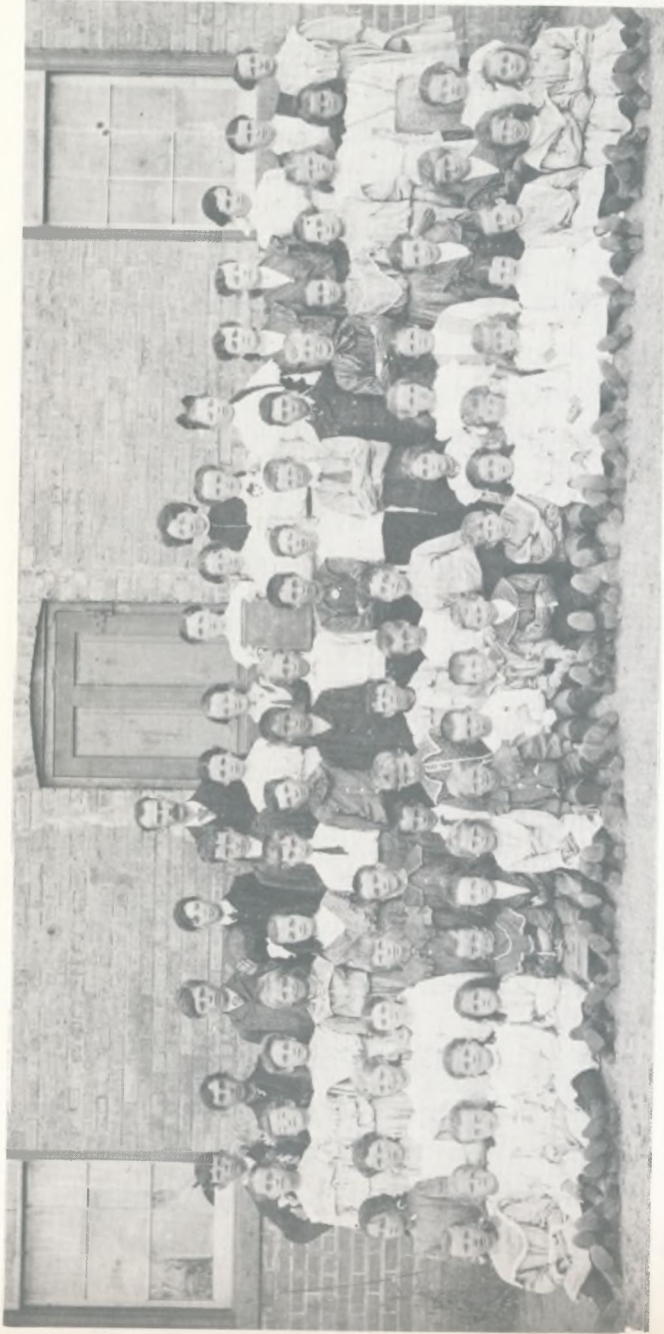
PUPILS OF S.S. No. 4 BLENHEIM AND No. 8 BLANDFORD (BRIGHT) – 1906

TOP ROW: Left to Right – Wesley Riesberry, Andrew Elliott, Robin Dewar, Cameron Aldridge, Comrie Dewar, May Currah, Belle Bristow, Maude Calder, Alice Bristow, Annie Riesberry, Mabel Currah, May Henderson, Kate Henderson – twins, Etta Sinclair, Edith Rogers, Jennie Nichol, Senior Room Teacher – Mr. Staples, Junior Room Teacher – Miss Heake.

2nd ROW FROM BACK: – Beth Bristow, Gertrude Bristow, Esther Nichol, Clara Brutzki, Hazel Burns, Frank McKie, Spencer Rogers, Thomas Shearer, Gordon Brutzki, Max Foreman, Carl Winters, Robert Shearer, Emerson Rogers, John Calder, Nellie Craig, May Cuthbertson, Eva Gilholm, Mary Ann Baer.

3rd ROW FROM BACK: – Elizabeth Craig, Olive Brand, Clara Currah, Elma Milgau, John Cuthbertson, Frank Wright, John Shearer, Hall Linton, Roy Currah, Lloyd Stadden, Douglas Bristow, Edna Stadden, Sybil Nichol, Ella Wright, Hilda Johnston, Edna Dewar, Gertrude Bristow.

FRONT ROW: – Alice Bristow, Annie Henderson, Jessie Bristow, Mabel Cuthbertson, Annie Stadden, Gretta Riesberry, Eva Johnston, Charlotte Baer, Clarence Cuthbertson, Harold Brand, William Calder, Fred Swan, Lorne Sinclair, Annie Hunter, Merle Currah, Bessie Nichol, Ella Cuthbertson, Carol Bristow, Irene Riesberry, Isabel Kerr.

Concession 10, commonly called the Upper Tenth. Some attended Blink Bonnie School. During the years 1871 –1875, a Mrs. Scott who lived on James Street in Bright taught some pupils in the old Baptist Church. The Bright Section was formed and a school was built and commenced to operate in 1875. The attendance at the new school soon became so large that the school was divided into two rooms and a second entrance placed on the south side. The section became known as No. 4 Blenheim and No. 8 Blandford.

Double desks were installed and a large box stove placed in the centre. In 1924, single desks replaced the original double ones. In 1935, it was equipped with hydro.

Mr. Bueglass was the first teacher engaged, followed by Mr. Windsor, Miss McMurchy, Miss White, Miss Huston, Miss Ella Craig, Mr. D. S. Brown, Mr. William McKie, Miss Miller, Miss Jane Shearer, Mr. Daniel Burke, and Mr. John Robson. (Jane Shearer and John Robson were local residents.) The names of later teachers may be found in the school records. Salaries at this time ranged from $180.00 to $450.00 per year. In 1891, Daniel Burke received $600.00 per annum. (Compare these with the salaries of 1963.)

Some of the early trustees were Richard Hewitt, Adam Fleischauer, Joseph Evans, E. J. Bristow, Benjamin Hobson, Mr. Monk, and William Elliott. It is believed that Messrs. Monk and Hobson were the first trustees.

In 1957, a modern three-room school was built in the same schoolyard in which the old one stood.

SCHOOL SECTION # 7 BLANDFORD AND # 12 BLENHEIM (WINDFALL SCHOOL)

This school was built in 1891 one mile east of the Blandford and Blenheim Townline on Concession 7. The Blandford portion of the Section consists of several lots adjacent to the Townline and nearer to this school than to any other in Blandford. This school was closed in 1963 and the pupils are now transported to central schools in the area.

BURFORD UNION SCHOOL

This School Section is composed of parts of four townships namely: Burford, Blenheim, East Oxford, and Lots 1, 2, 3, Concession 1, Blandford, the latter amounting to 600 acres.

SCHOOL SECTION # 9 BLANDFORD AND # 4 EAST ZORRA

Until 1940, an area in the southwest portion of Blandford Township close to Woodstock with the adjoining area in East Zorra formed this Section. About the above date, this portion of Blandford was annexed to the City of Woodstock and this portion of the school district disappeared.

PART SIX

INDUSTRIES

FARMING

Early settlers in Blandford, because of their background, naturally had as their main ambition the acquiring, clearing, and cultivating of their own land. The pioneer clearings developed gradually into fields and finally into farms. Because these pioneers found the soil productive in Blandford, they tended to stay with the land, to improve it, and expand their operations. Hence, farming became and still remains the key industry of the Township. While, for some years, mixed or general farming was the common practice, more recently specialized agricultural practices have developed in certain portions of the Township. Tobacco growing has developed the southern part of the Township into a prosperous area. In the northern portion, interest has centred on certain crops providing for the more economical feeding of cattle and hogs.

While other smaller industries developed, they did so primarily as a processing outlet for the products of the farm. There seems every likelihood that Blandford will remain primarily a farming area. The manufacturing needs and market outlets are provided by the several cities which

lie within a 30 mile radius of this Township. There would appear to be little need or profit in the extensive development of manufacturing within its boundaries.

LUMBERING

Before the days of early settlers, Blandford was almost entirely covered with bush. In the process of hewing out farms, the pioneers had to dispose of large numbers of trees. While many of these were burned, some enterprising settlers found it profitable to convert the trees to lumber thus providing building materials for their fellow settlers. In addition, much timber was sold to the Government for road-making. In some instances, timber grants were given to certain individuals. Sawmills sprang up along the streams and shores of the lakes in the Township. As has been mentioned, Vansittart built a large sawmill at Eastwood, conveying timber to this mill by a wooden railway running northeast into Concessions 3 and 4. Much of the output of this mill went to provide a plank roadway from Hamilton westward towards Brantford.

Timber from the central and eastern part of Blandford was conveyed to Woodstock to the mill of Hay & Company at a later date by a railway spur running from the vicinity of Blandford station on Lot 1, Concession 6, to the mainline of the C.P.R.

The Church Family, for many years, owned and operated a large sawmill on Lot 1, Concession 7. This was powered by a large steam engine.

A sawmill was also operated on the S½ of Lot 3, Concession 10, where a wooden dam provided waterpower. Details of the operations conducted here are unavailable.

As the land was cleared, the sawmills disappeared and lumbering, as an industry, assumed less and less importance. Today, it is no longer considered as an industry in Blandford, as the number of people involved in buying trees and selling logs is quite small. Scattered farm woodlots are all that remain in an area which was once completely covered with forest.

Occasionally, we read of someone who has had a very large tree growing on his property. The following well indicates something of the size and age of some of the deciduous trees which once grew in the north end of Blandford Township. The writer had on his farm, about 1910, a straight, stalwart, upstanding elm towering many feet above its neighbours of the same species. Since the tree showed signs of dying, it was decided to cut it down. It defied the effort of two or three wood cutters until an experienced local bushman brought it down with a crosscut saw. Stump high, it measured 6 feet across and, on the stump, the writer counted 390 rings. The bushman who felled it wondered if it might have been planted by Columbus. While this is hardly possible, it should be noted that this tree probably began to grow around 1520–25 about ten years before

Jacques Cartier made his first voyage to Canada. In all probability, Columbus was still living. The writer has not heard of, or read about many trees in this area exceeding either in size or age the elm just described.

It is difficult to realize that, slightly more than one hundred years ago, the southern part of Ontario was completely covered with primeval forest. In the central portions of Blandford Township, it would not be difficult to find stands of pine equal to those found in many other parts of Canada. The removal of these woodlands appeared, at the time, to be necessary for the progress of Agriculture. However, there were a few far-sighted pioneers who left a fair portion of their holdings in their natural state. Today the scarcity and correspondingly high price of good quality timber pay tribute to the wisdom of this move. Farm woodlands have become a most valuable legacy for those who hold title to them.

THE MAKING OF CHEESE AND BUTTER

As land was cleared and mixed farming developed in Blandford, farmers soon discovered that dairying was a profitable part of the agricultural industry. As livestock increased, most farmers produced more milk than their families could consume. Transportation facilities were not sufficiently developed to make the direct export of milk to neighbouring towns and cities practical. It was necessary

to process the milk right in the home or local community. To begin with, many pioneer farmers made their own cheese and butter but soon Cheese Factories sprang up in key centres throughout Blandford Township, manufacturing cheddar cheese. With the advent of the Cream Separator, the making of butter accompanied the manufacture of cheese.

These Cheese and Butter Factories prospered until fairly recent years when modern methods of handling milk have resulted in the direct transport of whole milk from the farm to dairies in cities and towns.

Blandford had several Cheese and Butter Factories as did other townships in Oxford County. A cheese market was held each week in Woodstock where cheese buyers and a salesman representative of each local factory met.

In Blandford, as elsewhere, most of the factories were erected by joint stock companies comprised of the local farmers. These patrons decided where the factory should be located. It must be remembered that these "factory communities" could not be too large since, until the middle 1920's, the only method of conveying the milk to the factory was in 30 or 40 gallon cans loaded on horse-drawn wagons. Usually, some farmer contracted to haul all the milk on his road. The contract for hauling was let to the lowest bidder at the annual meeting of the company. The farmer hauling the milk was not expected to lift any milk from the farmers' milkstands before 6:20 a.m. He was to have the milk delivered at the factory by 8 a.m. This meant early rising for the farmer who had a large herd of

cows. The cheesemakers themselves had long days often extending to 8 or 9 p.m. during the peak of production in the summer months.

In addition to the stock companies, some farmers had their own private factories supported by milk collected from their neighbours. One of these was Mr. Sylvester who had a plant beside his farm buildings on the north part of Lot 6, in Concession 11.
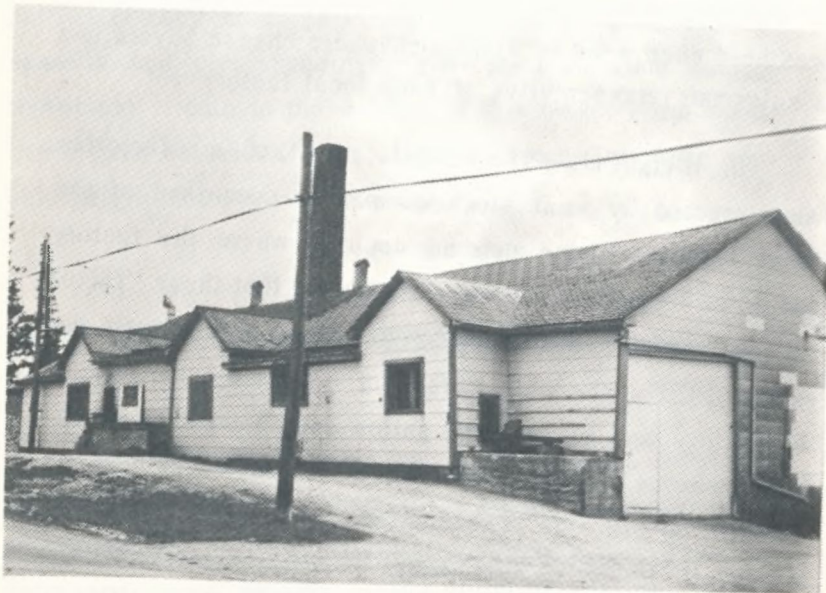
The above factory owned and operated by The Bright Cheese and Butter Manufacturing Company Limited is the only one of its kind in the area and represents one of the very few independent industries now operating in Blandford Township.

BRIGHT CHEESE FACTORY

This factory was first located on Lot 1, Concession 10, in 1873, but was later transferred to its present location, one-half mile north of Bright, on the Townline between Blandford and Blenheim. In early days, this factory produced only cheddar cheese but began the manufacture of butter on a fairly extensive scale about the beginning of World War I. This factory still operates successfully, making and shipping a fair quantity of both cheese and butter after local needs have been supplied. Daily production during the summer peak in earlier years was said to have frequently reached as high as 3,200 lbs. of cheese. In 1896, the factory reached a peak production of 192 tons for the year. At the time of writing, Bright Factory is claimed to be the only one making Cheddar Cheese in Oxford County.

BLANDFORD AND EAST ZORRA FACTORY

This plant was located across the Thames River approximately one half mile west of the end of Concession 9 in Blandford. Thus it served farmers in both townships. It was often referred to as "The Big Factory" being, at one time, the third largest producing factory in Ontario. (The highest production was in a factory in Eastern Ontario.) Because of the proximity of this area to Woodstock, and the

powdered-milk plant at Hickson, the factory ceased to operate about 1945.

BLANDFORD STATION

For a period of time in the early years of this century, a small factory operated at Blandford Station serving a community comprised of parts of both Blandford and Blenheim.

BETHEL FACTORY

Sometime around 1870, a cheese factory was built on the property of Angus Ferguson who owned Lot 5, Concession 2. It was a joint-stock company and had amongst its first directors: Fred Vickert, Robert Robinson, and J. L. Overholt. Cheese-makers in charge were: Mr. Tindall, Joe Copeland, Robert Thompson as well as others. For a time, the factory prospered, probably making 15 to 20 cheese per day. However, competition became keen; the company got into debt; had to borrow money; and finally was closed by the directors who at that time were Michael Townsend, E. M. Hersee, Thomas Costello, and Thomas Millar. The closing of this plant probably meant no serious hardship for the majority of the patrons who found a ready market for their milk in either Woodstock or Princeton,

where a powdered-milk plant was located. The distance to either centre from this area is not great.

OTHER INDUSTRIES

In this present time, when oil is being found in neighbouring localities, it is gratifying to know that it is also being found in Blandford. In 1961, a well was drilled on Lot 4, Concession 6. The following year, another was drilled on Lot 4, Concession 5, the Chesney farm, which produces a product of high quality. While the future of these new developments is still uncertain, it is hoped that this venture will grow and other wells may be developed.

PART SEVEN

IN RETROSPECT

The history of Blandford Township, while not spectacular, is unique in many respects. Descendants of many of the original settlers still farm land cleared by their earlier relatives. The balance between urban and rural growth has changed little throughout the years. Farming is still, and will continue to be, the chief means of livelihood and profit to the people who claim Blandford as their home. As is to be expected, time and progress have combined in bringing about many changes in methods of farming and standards of living. Contrary to what has happened in some areas, land values have increased several hundredfold.

Blandford Township represents a very rich and stable portion of Ontario's economy. Over a period of years, the people of the Township have worked hard and achieved much. Unlike some areas, production here has exceeded local needs. Markets have been sought and found in towns and cities outside the Township. The people have become independent and prosperous. While the present settlers still face many serious economic, social, and educational problems, a bright future beckons.

It is hoped that those who have read the foregoing paragraphs will have sensed something of the struggle,

sacrifice, and effort involved and will pause out of respect for those whose labours have made this heritage possible.