

# TAKE -A-HIKE SERIES

## Article 1

And why not start from the cairn at Rock Point. Not long ago this was land of the Six Nations. Now the trail winds through a [Provincial Park](#). Why the change? Certainly, the vast swamps around the mouth of the Grand provided a rich source of supplemental foods and comfort materials for the natives e.g. pelts of beaver and muskrats, wild rice, succulent roots of young cattails, etc. No easy answers!

Hike on and turn out of the park onto Niece Rd., named after the first European settler in the area . "Samuel" came shortly after the Indians had agreed to surrender some of the land for a naval base at the mouth of the Grand - 295 acres. The war of 1812 had revived the fear of a possible American expansion drive. As well , the Chiefs were looking for additional income to buy guns, ammunition, blankets and other items desired by their subjects. Buyers for the swampy lands did not arrive in droves. The Chiefs could do with some help. They thought they found it in Mr. Dickenson (also found in the sources as "Dickson") a recently arrived lawyer. So in advance of expected professional services he was given 4000 acres of land, the entire present-day township of Sherbrooke! " Whether the (anticipated ) professional services were ever rendered, or whether they were ever needed, is difficult to tell..." states the H & R Page Historical Atlas (Haldimand-Norfolk 1877-1879).

Whatever, settlement by American migrants and United Empire Loyalists followed rapidly. We see many Nieces (all sons of Samuel?), Furrys, Kinnards and Dichouts on the registry map of 1887. Dickenson does not show up on this map. Gone to warmer climes?? Perhaps to Dumfries?



Leaving the "later-ons" the arduous task of clearing, tillage and drainage with lighter wallets?? Whatever..., drainage - that last task - turned out to be "not least" in this the "Cranberry Marsh". For Boulton's and Furry's ditches were soon to be followed by the canal works of one [William Hamilton Merritt](#). [[The William Hamilton Merritt stamp](#).] He found a pool of expertise and a way to realise his dream of a canal from Lake Ontario to Lake Erie which had run into some unexpected difficulties just North of Welland.

Hike on to the outskirts of Stromness ([map](#)). Once called Broad Creek you see the connection - a steering hut of a large laker in a yard on the East side of Regional Rd. 3. Yes, there once was a ship building industry here! The village was born of canals coming from 3 directions at this point - turning basin and slipway to serve a launch. That's that swamp at km 4.5. Not dug without strain. In those days accomplished with horse scrapers and a labour force of about a thousand men moving stinking black muck underlain by sticky, heavy blue clay with clouds of mosquitoes buzzing around them, feeding on them. Fights and riots. Sometimes the army had to be called in - 1842! Still, eventually, a viable inland waterway resulted.

Hike on. Our trail follows North on the tow path of the East bank, changing to the West bank then back and back again at another turning basin - Mumby Rd. Hike on into Dunnville. Turn left at Tamarack Street towards old Front Street and follow the blazes to the parking lot near the bridge. This lot and the new Grand River Landing Condos have taken the place of 3 mills and their mill ponds - grist, wool and lumber. Across the road you might have found the locks with a

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scow [flat-bottomed boat with square unpointed ends] bound for Cayuga. We'll hike on towards that place next time starting from km 12.2.

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### Article 2

And take the (second) bridge across Sulphur Creek. You're at km 13 and have entered the town originally named for Governor Haldimand who lost the naming to another Governor Byng. Behind you is the former dam (the first bridge took its place) that shortly after its construction caused a flood of the First Nations' lands upstream and the first lawsuit against a struggling Grand River Navigation Company. The fence on your right bars you from entering the present Conservation area. Note the little causeway crossing Sulphur Creek. Straight ahead of the crossing was the Welland Canal Superintendent's office-the present shack on that hill perhaps - certainly at or near that position. Behind you also is the town of Dunnville, thriving in the 1870's, boasting six hotels, a custom house and various utility services all built within 50 years after the first signs of its birth.

Hike on. You'll have to take the road unfortunately, bypassing the Conservation lands that would provide so much better hiking. It's a long way on that busy road, but you'll make quiet Aikens Rd. before long. Just before you're near the river again the trail bends West on River Rd. Resist the turn for the moment and take the off-trail path down Dicks Rd to the Anger pioneer cemetery. You're on historical ground with a beautiful view of the river. Across the Grand is the Dochstader Tract, scene of a confrontation in 1785 that might have led to full scale war. Here's why:

On a cold winter day a Col. Clinch from Newark (Niagara Falls) decided to take his one-horse open sleigh and a keg of whiskey to his friends, the Dochstaders. On his way he met a small group of Delawares who took a formidable liking to his whiskey. The colonel could not do much about it, being unarmed and outnumbered. So the Indians drank their fill and retired well sloshed. The colonel, humiliated and in a rage, drove down to the nearest settler, one John Huff who lent him a "fowling piece" (gun for small game). With it Clinch made his way back to the Indians who fled but not before he had shot and severely wounded one of them. The colonel then drove to Capt. Dochstader and presented the latter with the remaining whiskey and explanation. The captain could see that his colonel had been sober EXCEPT for his judgment on the incident. So he quickly dispatched a runner to Capt. Joseph Brant (Theyendenagae) the Mohawk Chief and friend in Brantford. The Chief knew the swiftness of Delaware revenge and hurried to the Dochstaders with 200 warriors.



Not a minute too soon, for the Delawares had already assembled a force and with it surrounded the house. However Brant's force outnumbered and outclassed the Delawares and the whole matter was soon peaceably settled. The colonel was escorted out of the area never to return. No doubt Brant and Dochstader made good use of the remaining whiskey to renew their friendship.

Hike on and you'll soon see the Huff tract, source of that infamous gun, if you take the road to the river once more, this time from km.27.2 (Yaremy Rd). It's straight across from this point. John Huff settled here after his service with the Butler's Rangers soon to depart for New York State once more at the outbreak of the War of 1812. War causes many migrations and many changes. But till then Upper Canada remained a very quiet Loyalist colony with a slow pace of life. After that war the pace would quicken, first with the building of major roads, canals

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and eventually the railways. But I'm running ahead a bit here. Better to pick it up at the first major road in the area as we hike a short stretch of it. And in the process please welcome another colonel. Also at times a little irate, but at least he stayed away from gun settlements. Development was next instead.

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## Article 3

... Down River Road towards the Talbot or Stage Road, now Highway 3. Colonel Thomas (de) Talbot took the initiative to have this road created. Thomas' axe felled trees as easily as his brother's sword cut down Napoleon's Army at Waterloo. Brother Arthur Wellesley (de) Talbot became the famous (Iron) Duke of Wellington. Thomas is now almost forgotten though some 65000 acres were settled during his administration of the Talbot Settlement.

The applicants for land came sometimes by waterway ( Lake Erie ), sometimes by land route . In case of the latter they would have carried their belongings 100 kms from Fort Erie to this point (our "km 37.0") with another 200 to go in order to reach the land registry shack near the town named after Colonel Talbot : St. Thomas. He was anything but a saint--certainly a little eccentric. Here's a sample (from E. Ermatinger's "Life of Colonel Talbot and the Talbot Settlement) of development as administered by Colonel Thomas in the days of yore:



Enter "Pat", an adventurer and applicant:

'--' 'What do you want!' - the first invariable salutation convinced our adventurer that he was in the right place.

'I have come, Colonel, to see, as I have a large rising family, whether you could n't give me 2 or 300 acres of land.'

'Devil a sod ', was the reply.

'Well, I was thinking , Colonel, if I got a grant of land, I could make some improvement in the settlement .'

'I dare say you could, but I got no land for you.'

'Well, I always heard ,Colonel, that you were a good friend of the poor, and...'

'I want none of your blarney ; you can have 100 acres in Tillberry West.'

'Faith, Colonel ! ', rejoined our Pat , 'I've come far enough west already. '... --"

So he had : present - day Tilbury is another 100 km west of St.Thomas ! He tried a little harder and ended up with some very valuable real estate in St. Thomas, one of the luckier ones perhaps because of the gift of gentle persuasion. The Colonel often made it hard for the would-be settler, in spite of the fact that he had much to gain from the sale of the land . For every 50 acres settled, he kept 150 acres for himself through agreement with Lord Simcoe's administration.  
Hike on ! For...

" When you 'walk' across Ontario  
On a glorious summer day.  
And follow Highway Fifty Four  
Or " Three " along the way.  
You will find a mighty river  
By the stately bridge that's spanned.  
And you'll know you've reached The Town  
Cayuga on the GRAND.

H. Howey, U.C. Manse, Cayuga"

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## Article 4

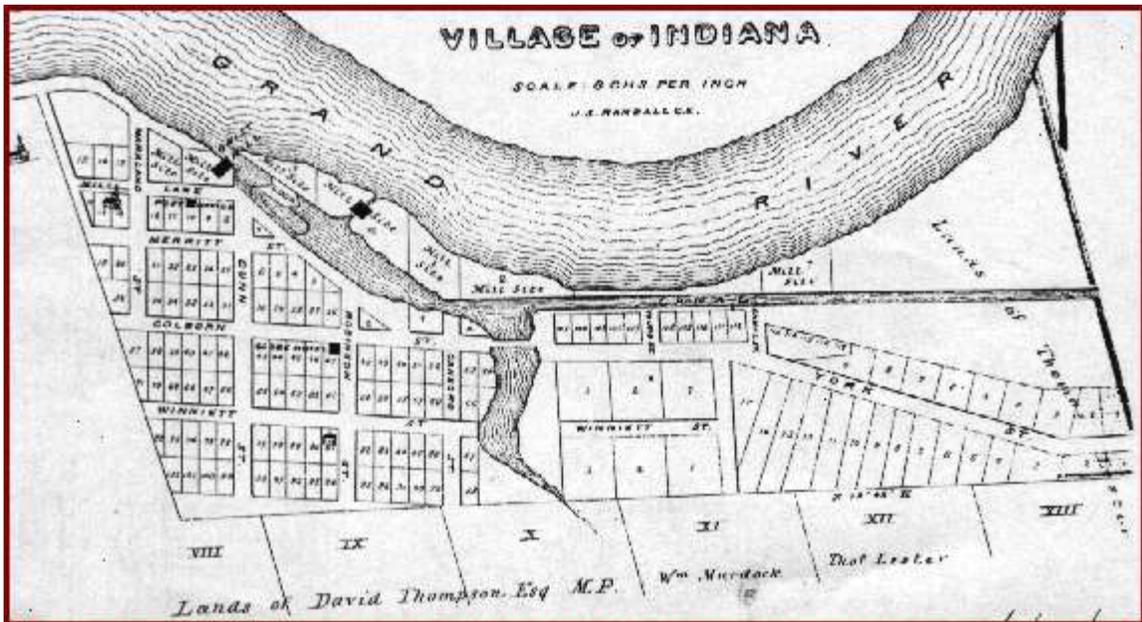
This one could bring special treats if you hike and take a break at the right time. Enjoy the guided tours here on serene hiking trails leading to a superb treat of tea and scones in the stately mansion: RUTHVEN on the GRAND.

Approach hat in hand; official visits at the front door, unofficial at the rear with the servants. You're at the residence of the late David Thompson MPP, patriarch of a dynasty of members of Parliament for Haldimand. He arrived here (1830's) after receiving a grant of land as a reward for his services to Canada in the war of 1812 and his work on the Welland Canal as a right hand of Canada's father of transportation : William Hamilton Merritt. David was a man of many talents. He achieved much in a very short time notwithstanding family tragedies. His two young sons died in Wainfleet in the 1830-ies, his wife 4 years later. Yet he built the Grand River Navigation Co., the mansion and the town of Indiana leaving 1200 acres and a fortune to his descendants, a close-knit family as you can verify by visiting the family cemetery on that knoll near the river. Pick up a "family-tree" at the Gatehouse and verify that the burial pattern resembles a family-tree in its own way ! David was buried here in 1851, followed by David II MP, Lt. Col. Andrew MP and Major Andrew who carried the Mace into Parliament not long ago (1950's). More members of Parliament per square foot of cemetery than anywhere in Canada?? Certainly a Liberal Party family of great distinction; a substantial piece of Canadian history you can find less than two-tenths km. south of our km. 44.0 (map 3). Well worth the effort. Please report at the gatehouse. Better yet, come to one of our guided tours



during the summer.

Hike on !, to the town of Indiana, once nestled in that valley just North



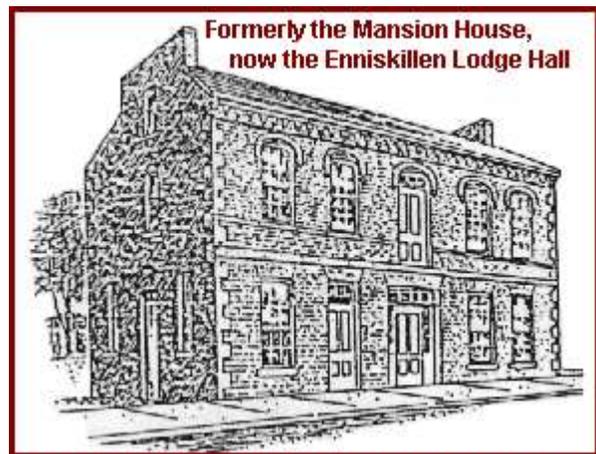
of Ruthven. You can take Mill Lane or, from Hwy. 54, the lane to the Gingerbread House: former Markland Street. "Gingerbread" is now a fine Country Inn which contains in its walls

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and foundation remnants of Indiana's Post Office. On the opposite side of Markland was David's house before he built Ruthven.

Retrace your steps towards km. 44.0 again. The town was snugly nestled between this spot and the river in this valley with its 2 churches, grave-yard, mills, pail factory , distillery, lock and canal; a bustling community of more than 300 souls. Mostly Irish workers in this town which reached its peak in 1850, then was gone within 50 years hence. Only the old canal remains visible on the West side of 54 over the next 2.5 kms. When you take Grand Sports Rd. you can see it clearly in front of the white cottages there. The dam is gone, so the water level has dropped in the river section between here and York. But the trees that lined its banks still grace the landscape; the Irish workers and their families rest in the cemetery near the Gingerbread House and the river rolls on.

Hike on! - to the town of York, once the largest and most important in the area. Plaques in the area reveal details of the Young (orig. Jung) and Nelles families. They came from war-torn Germany in the early 17 hundreds to seek religious freedom. They found it in Upstate New York soon to be torn by war for freedom from colonial rule. So Major Hendrick (Henry) Nelles moved to Canada to remain loyal to Britain and its King. Here he settled and raised his family. Mary Nelles in Caledonia has the records. The first volume of her genealogy of the Nelles (Nellis) families has nearly 1000 pages and contains over 10 000 names of descendants. She 's working on the second volume. Look around this place. An early hotel is still on your trail. Take a moment to view the various plaques in the park and on the church property of St. John's Anglican. The land was "bought" from the Nelles family for 5 shillings in 1845. The Parish Hall now serves as an Antique Shop; so you may pick up something of value for your collection. If not here, try across the river at the other part of the Nelles Settlement: Mt Healy and its Dochstader Hotel. Many points of interest in this part of the Grand!



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### Article 5

Follow the trail to Simms Lock, #3 of the Grand River Navigation Company. The trail leads along the river through what is sometimes referred to as "bottomland", an assembly of trees, shrubs and grasses adapted to the periodic flooding and icing of the area. A grand job of annual remodeling occurs as the winter ice breaks up and the floes flood into this area, cutting trees and shrubbery into firewood and kindling material. The farmers have left this area to its grand rightful owner in most cases, sending only their livestock for some sustenance when conditions allowed. Anglers are the uninvited guests of this host who rewards them often richly nonetheless. Otherwise the occasional hiker or wanderer visits out of curiosity.

One such arrived just a little over one hundred years ago, the son of a Cherokee father and a Scottish mother. He wandered in from the banks of the Ohio and came to stay near those of the Grand. Six feet tall, good-looking, enterprising and of great ability he soon rose to the rank of civil and war chief of the Mohawks receiving the name of Teyoninhokarawen. But having been educated largely in Scotland he became known as Captain John Norton. He also became a key figure in the often difficult early settlement period of Upper Canada after the death of Joseph Brant in 1807. He participated in the war of 1812 on the side of the British, married a young Native woman after that war, did a trip to Scotland and returned to become involved in the first Bible translation into Mohawk, completing the Gospel of St. Matthew. In the years following he acquired a large tract of land in the Simm's Lock area where he built Hillhouse and a log house for the farm manager. [Picture: Farm Manager's house where Robert Thomson would have lived, was built in the early 1800's near Hillhouse.]



All went well for several years, but trouble brewed during hay-making in 1823. His wife (Catherine or Karighwaycagh) complained to him about a young man, Joseph Big Arrow, making advances to her and "upbraiding her modesty". When the young man in question was confronted with these charges he challenged Norton to a duel. It was one of the last duels fought in Canada and cut short the life of Joseph Big Arrow. You will pass the spot on your right as you come down the slope of Simm's Lock Drive near and just SE of its junction with Hwy. 54. This is also the spot where Norton's mansion "Hillhouse" stood. After trial Catherine, Norton and son John left the area; the first to the London area and the last two to Cherokee country. Norton never returned nor was he ever heard from again. A sad ending for a brilliant man and career. Writes Barbara Martindale in "Caledonia" (Natural Heritage - 1995): "He deserved more acclaim than he was given. He did not deserve the legendary inaccuracy he received." "...there was much more to John Norton than the duel fought in the latter stages of his life."

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Hike on!, turn into River Rd. As in the case of Simm's Lock Drive, this also was once the main road from York to ...well,... Seneca, though today we would say Caledonia. You will have a reminder of the earlier village as you enter the park. The saw mill that gave birth to the village stood here near the old iron bridge in the north -end. The Grand River Navigation Company operated lock and dam (#4) here from 1835 to about 1871. The company's employees, carpenters, masons, labourers etc. came to enrich the area. A bridge was planned to link Seneca to its counterpart on the other side of the river. But one Ranald MacKinnon had a different vision. He thought the bridge should be established at the hamlet of Bryant's Corners (a tavern and a couple of log houses), midway between Seneca and the next dam (#5) where Ranald had established saw and grist mills. The dam and lock helped create the village of Oneida there and its counterpart across the river: Sunnyside. Ranald's activities as a contractor continued with contracts on the plank road between Hamilton and Port Dover. The Government of Upper Canada deemed this road necessary for swift troop movements in case of insurrections, Fenian raids or another war with the Americans. Meanwhile railways were being rumored as possible creators of ...well...wealth. So may be a railway station in between the villages as well as the plank road ?? That's where they ended up and 3 villages were united; today we would call it Amalgamation! Anything new?? The blue herons still fish in numbers in the shallows of the river across from Seneca park. The anglers the same across from Oneida park while the village of Caledonia is still growing on both sides of the river-still-rolling-on. Its centre is of course the old Bryant's Corners, now the intersection of Hwys. 6 and 54. There still is a licensed restaurant at the corner and there are still folks in the village that will tell you:



"Our village does not claim to be  
The largest in the land.  
We're just a pretty little burg  
Along the River Grand.  
But we have points of interest  
That make life here worthwhile  
And bring you home contented  
When you've travelled many a mile."

( O.T. Scott - 1927)

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## Article 6

So here we are in the centre of Caledonia ready to cross Highway 6. Hike on! the trail follows through the lovely Kinsmen Park on the flood protection dike. Enjoy the views: the old mill on the opposite shore ( a local trail called the Ramsay Walk leads to this impressive structure) , the islands with all the birds , the anglers in the shallows below the dam. When you near the latter you find a little ditch on your right. This was once the millrace for a McKinnon mill , now a fishladder. Continuing on the flood control dike you will soon reach the end of the park and the limits of the town. Mines Rd. takes you to the wide open spaces where, in the early 1800's, the farms were established from log cabins with blood, sweat and tears. The bad harvest of 1788-89 nearly destroyed the entire initial efforts to convert the forest into thriving farms. The settlers were paying a heavy price as it was in terms of hardships e.g. deprivation and isolation. The price of the "land grant" would be augmented by interest added to the principal and dreams of ownership and comforts dissipated into nightmares of debt and disappointment. Cheap whiskey gave only short-run relief to long-run disaster. So bankruptcies were common with new "ownerships" often repeating the pattern. The money lenders complained that "Canadians are very much addicted to drinking and ...frequently under the influence". The cause of the misery was usually ignored. The families suffered the consequences...



Picture: A replica of the "Red Jacket" crafted for the 1967 Centennial Parade in Caledonia.

"...women that come hither give way to melancholy regrets" writes Catherine Parr Trail (The Backwoods of Canada). The Upper Canada House of Assembly Journals of 1830 states: There are six debtors confined on executions issued out of the Court of King's Bench..."One debtor is in jail with his wife and five children" (pg.162-footnote). An unknown Scottish poet lamented:

MY HAME *	Key
	*Home
I canna ca* this forest	*call
hame	* foreign
It is nae hame to me;	*uncouth
Ilk tree is suthern* to my	*eye
heart	
And unco* to my e'e*	

Hike on!; Harrison Rd. is soon reached. This road was once the eastern margin of the Onondaga School Lot.

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As we turn West after crossing the tracks, we follow along the Northern margin of the Lot for a short distance before we follow the power line service corridor and cart track. All the land to the South and West of these margins were earmarked for the education of Chief Joseph Brant's protegee. A Western education such as the Chief himself had received became a broken dream here. The former school lot is a neighbour to the LaFortune property. This conservation area, presently managed as a Campground by the new Haldimand County, was once the property of Perry LaFortune. He "sold" it for the usual \$ 1.- to the Grand River Conservation Authority who in turn "sold" it again to the present owners. Unfortunately, the flood plain area to the West of Hwy 54 does not seem entirely suited to this type of land use. One cannot help wondering if Perry would have been happy with this arrangement as he seems to have been a very conservation-minded person.



Hike on! We cross Big Creek just before turning the corner at Brant 22. The Big Creek Boat Farm is a unique feature in this area. John and Luella Albin operate Sunset and Luncheon Cruises here. They follow a tradition started in the days of the Grand River Navigation Company. The Grand River Queen and the Red Jacket sternwheelers operated dinner cruises and transportation from Brantford to Caledonia- at 10k an hour on average it took long enough to have a dinner or lunch. Having done some research the Albins decided to start this venture in 1978 and they now operate 3 boats on the once sleeping Grand. Captains and their crews will fill you in on the history of the area as you cruise and dine for about \$ 30.- per person.

After this 3 hour entertainment you will feel refreshed and ready to ...

Hike on! the road is open to the Pauline Johnson Rd. and access to the First Nations lands which you will encounter next.

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### Article 7

Km 71.0: Your first encounter along the trail with present-day First Nations' land. The trail from Middleport Rd follows along the Northern boundary to Pauline Johnson Rd. The lands between here and the river are a Northern extension of the main part of Reserve #40, the Six Nations Reserve,. It's one of the largest reserves in North America. Land is community-owned and permission for any use has to be arranged through the Land Registry Office in Oshweken. You can reach it by following Pauline Johnson Rd to where it changes to Chiefswood Rd. Here you find Odrohekta, the meeting place, and Chiefswood, the house in which Emily Pauline Johnson was born in 1862. The village is a few kilometers further South.

Picture: Chiefswood, the East entrance. It can be seen and is approached from the highway. The other (West) is approached from the river and through some forest!

If you have visited

Odrohekta or Chiefswood you will have become aware of the rich culture and heritage carried on here. "E. Pauline" was born into this rich culture. Her father was an Indian Chief whose hereditary

chieftaincy went back 600 years. He gave up these hereditary rights to marry a Scottish girl who stressed the importance of good manners and comportment. The Chief spoke English, French and German to complement his working knowledge of 6 native languages. Emily Susanna Howells managed the household in the British tradition . They were an unusual pair and lived an unusual life. Their home, Chiefswood, had an Eastern main entrance and a Western one and still has! The Eastern was used by visitors from England, the Western by the Iroquois. Pauline, one of the four children of Susanna and Chief Johnson, became a poetess and actress. She was often called "the Mohawk Princess". She could certainly come up with some royal answers to put-downs. At the unveiling of the Brant Memorial her poetry was read and reported on by a Toronto critic. He was not impressed but remarked that Miss Johnson was "a pleasant-looking Indian maiden". She replied to him with her pen:

No compliment on her L'll laden  
She's but a pleasant  
looking maiden.

To counter further she showed royal strength in the nature of her chosen work as a stage actress as well as in the extent of her travels. She crossed the Atlantic 6 times and the Rocky Mountains 19. This with a stage coach driver called Billy Cariboo whose side duties were ticket-taker and doorman. Her ability to adapt allowed her to use an oat bin with a blanket strung across the front as a dressing room and perform on a billiard table, all the time promoting her native culture. Peter Unwin sums up her endeavours well in the Beaver ( Oct/Nov. 1999):



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"This is what she saw-the frontier where human society flew by the seat of its pants,and the rules were made as the game got played. She was a woman who chased this frontier even as it vanished in front of her, knowing that it was transitory,that it would soon be gone forever. She was there witnessing the death of pioneer Canada and when Cariboo Billy died in 1908 she consoled herself by noting that ' he had made his exit in the very scene that saw the romance of the play on the wane. ' A fitting observation from the woman who played the lead role."

A great lady passed this way! [[The Pauline Johnson Archive - McMaster University](#)]

Hike on! Cross the stile into the Buist property with its near-century old farm house (just to the North ). At the third stile you will cross into First Nations' forest and field to emerge at Painter Rd. from one of our finest tracts in the Southern section. The road leads to Onondaga, village of the tribe with the most votes in the Council of the Six Nations. The idea of this Council or League had come from the Mohawks, the 'people of the flint' (a hard silicate used to make fire) The symbolism seems clear- they (the Mohawks) provided the spark for a new life. The Six Nations were all people with a longhouse tradition. The Mohawks persuaded the others to enter into a council to discuss problems and opportunities and avoid the frequent wars between them. The Senecas, Oneidas and Cayugas came on side. The longhouse served as a symbol; the Cayugas and Oneidas became the guardians of the Eastern door, the Mohawks and Senecas those of the Western door; last to join were the Ononodagas who became the keepers of the 'flame' , the hearth in the center of the longhouse, since they were won over after initial objection. With the final joining of the Tuscaroras they became the Six Nations that adopted the 'Great Laws of Peace': to love, appreciate and respect one another. USA President Woodrow Wilson would suggest centuries later to have a League of Nations formed after the First World War. The United Nations resulted from it. To make the UN work well would it need more of the symbolism of the originators of the idea?



Hike on! Down the road you find an early remnant of Western influence-still operating. This is the terminal point of the Southern section of our trail. At the Mission Church on Salt Springs Rd. we will begin with another set of historical musings.

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### Article 8

Yes! Salt Springs Road did have a spring from which one could procure salt, not far from our km 85.7 (Map 7). One Daniel Burtch did even though his place of abode was at "Burtch's Landing" across the river. Coming from Paris he'd landed his canoe here and stayed. The Grand River Navigation Company called it Newport and that name has stuck. A school was built and the kids went there by rowboat in summer and fall ,across the ice in winter, hopscothed across on the ice cakes in spring. No fatalities are on record and no one took the school board to court. Happier days?? Well, Newport flourished with exports of grain going as far as "to supply the Allies besieging the far-famed Russian city of Sebastopol" during the Crimean War (Expositor-summer 1855 according to Jean Waldie's Brant County Vol. II pg. 25). Across the river religious activity also flourished with the conversion of several Indian chiefs and their braves. Here at the present site of the Mission Church the Indian congregation built a wooden church with help from the Baptist Missionary Society. Rev. William Ryerson, brother of educator Dr. Egerton Ryerson (founder of the Educational System of the Province of Ontario!), was the first missionary here.

Egerton preached at the Salt Springs Mission on many occasions.

Hike on! Newport bridge to Tutela Heights. You are cutting across the "neck" of a large oxbow (loop) in the Grand. The North part of the loop reaches 7 km up to Cainsville; the South part another 7 km down to the



Newport bridge. A full 6 sq. km, the Oxbow Tract, is contained between the two parts. The heights of land around here were named for the Tutelo Indians a few of whose descedants (most wiped out in a cholera epidemic) could still be found nearby when Alexander Graham Bell's parents settled here. Their homestead is the place where in 1874 Alexander had invented the "harp" telephone which he later converted into a "membrane" speaking telephone. The latter was tested between the Bell Homestead and the telegraph office in Brantford in 1876 using Dominion Telegraph wires. Alexander spoke with understandable anticipation. Back came the reply from the operator: "I can hear you spendidly". Alexander could hardly believe the success. But his sense of humour was intact when he asked Mohawk Chief [Smoke](#) Johnson to send a few words across the wire in Mohawk.

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"Sago gatchi ; ska na ka?" (Good greetings cousin; how are you?)

"What's that? I can't hear you now ", came the answer. The operator requested repeat and the Chief obliged twice.



The operator of course did not understand, became impatient and blurted out: "Are you fellows intoxicated?" Chief Johnson repeated this outburst to the bystanders who responded with loud laughter. Alexander's telephone had passed the test. The age of communication had begun in earnest. A week later a long-distance call was arranged to nearby Paris (Aug. 10, 1876) The world ,once more, was no longer the same the next day!

Hike on! You will be crossing the Gilkison Flats named for Capt. William Gilkison and his sons. The Captain bought a tract in West Brantford known as the Woods farm. He chose the high ground of Tutela for a house and "the farm buildings a little lower down"(from his diary) . "Oak Banks House is as pretty as one can imagine, overlooks the village of Brantford of 350 souls"... "the view up and down the Grand River is beautiful". He must have loved the river as we do. So he bought more land in Nichol Tp. and had surveyor Burwell survey land he had purchased there "at seven shillings and sixpence an acre...!" He instructed Burwell : " At the Falls ... I propose to survey a place for a town and to sell it to all newcomers". Development had arrived again; this town would be named Elora. The buyers came and made it very special indeed. We will come to it later.

Hike on! Cross the old TH and B bridge (actually means Toronto, Hamilton and Buffalo Railway though I have heard other meanings of the acronym) You are close to the original Brant's Ford, the place where one crossed the river before ferries or bridges arrived on the scene. Walk along the river on the old railway bed of the CN line that served the industries of Brantford. Near here too was the junction of rail and canal transportation. Just to your right as you walk North along the river you will find Wharf Street, below and parallel to Colborne. Both CN and TH & B served the town and water front (canal) in this area. When the wharves and rails were abandoned hikers gained many a mile of trail . Earlier many industries found a home in Brantford because of this transportation advantage. So famous names like Cockshutt and Harris Son & Co.(later Massey Harris) manufactured farm equipment while Waterous made the engines and the tractors. Brantford sold world wide, ground breaking novelties like the "Ten bottom chilled ploughs" and the "champion fire-proof" farm engines. Industrial activity increased markedly again during WW II. The Holmedale neighbourhood bears witness to this with it many "war time" houses. Perhaps this war time growth spurt has contributed a lot to the recession the town presently shows on its main street: Colborne. Life has its ups and downs. But a happy hiker can find much to enjoy in these early Ontario communities.



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## Article 9

Sometimes folks will tell you that our trail to Paris is not the safest and, yes!, it's not good practice to hike it alone. It is certainly safer than it was for Launcelot Adams in 1859. A mail carrier on the Brantford-Paris route, he was attacked and killed on the river trail on April 14 of that year.

His attackers were after the money and valuables in the mail sacks he was transporting to the Paris train station of the Great Western. (Brantford at that time still did not have a train connection.) The mail bags were taken into one of those ravines in the area. But the police went into swift action and apprehended three men. They soon found evidence: a gun and money from the mail on the brigands' property and wax under their finger nails! The latter was absolute proof in those days. Two were hanged and the third received a life sentence.

Hike on! There is better news from the women in this area. The story comes from the Yeighs who lived in nearby Burford Township. Isabella Yeigh had to take care of the farm while her rebelling husband was fleeing from McNab's "Family Compact forces during the Rebellion of 1837." McNab sent Col. Chisholm to the Yeigh Farm to arrest Jacob Yeigh. Isabella greeted the colonel at the door and demanded to know his business. Unaccustomed to the woman's firmness of tone and stature, the colonel became angry:

"You are powerless... We are looking for rebels, and if you show any insolence, I will have but to raise my finger as a signal and your house will be in ashes".

"You can burn my home, Sir, that I know full well, but you cannot crush my spirit." she replied. "Do your worst!".

"You are a strangely brave woman", allowed the officer and retreated swiftly from this little battlefield of the spirit !



Dr. Emily Jennings Stowe

Another story came from the Jennings in the area. Emily H. Jennings began life here and served her community as a teacher from age 15 (!). Became the first female High School (then Grammar School) teacher in the Dominion next. She did not leave it at that. Having become [Mrs. Stowe](#) and the mother of three children she set her sights on another career. Chose the (then) male-dominated medical profession. Battled much prejudice and opposition but became the first woman in the Dominion to enter medical practice. Dr. Stowe became a strong advocate for the admission of



Dr. Augusta Stowe Gullen

## TAKE -A-HIKE SERIES

women to the University of Toronto where she practiced medicine. Hats off (guys!) to this lady.

[Dr. Emily Jennings Stowe](#), (above, left) in 1868, born in Mt. Pleasant, was the first woman doctor in Ontario and a prominent suffragette. Her daughter, Augusta Stowe Gullen (above, right), was Canada's first woman medical graduate.

Hike on! You will be pleasantly surprised to view the town of Paris from the heights of the Johnson section of our trail. This area around km 114.0-115.0 used to be alive with the shunting of railway cars of the Great Western (Toronto to Windsor and Sarnia) and the Buffalo and Lake Huron (Buffalo to Goderich) Railways. They crossed here at Paris. Look towards the West, down into the valley. Isn't it the prettiest sight?! Those church steeples, the houses and manufacturing places all so snugly nestled in that valley. Some of these buildings built with those rounded cobbles right out of the river or one of the eskers in the area. You've just climbed up to the heights of the Southern tip of the Galt moraine. The latter extends as a height of land Northeasterly past the town of Galt (now part of Cambridge). [Eskers](#), [kames](#), [drumlins](#) and [moraines](#) were some of the special hilly landforms laid down in these areas during the most recent continental glaciation. A huge sheet of ice covered most of Canada and the shape of some lobes of this sheet can still be recognized from the shapes of the Great Lakes.

The Galt moraine was created by the bull-dozing action of the Ontario ice lobe (estimated 5000 ft thick), digging down to excavate the present lake and delivering the materials Westward as far as today's Waterloo County. Some of that material is deposited in the shape of oval hills, called drumlins. Some of it is deposited in front of the glacial lobe's "snout" as end moraine. The entire ridge along our trail from Paris to Glen Morris (on the East side) is end moraine which geologists have named the Galt moraine because of the village built on it. The flats on the West side are part of an "outwash" plain, an area where meltwater from the glacier flowed to wherever it could. The Grand took it towards lake Erie and though the ice sheets have retreated far to the North since (Baffin Island; Greenland) it created a conduit that drains these heights of land of South-Central Ontario to this day. Wherever the Grand met up with other streams it frequently provided settlers with an opportunity to create a town site. Paris originated at the "Forks" where the Nith enters, Preston where the Speed enters (after joining with the Eramosa at Guelph). At Paris, one Hiram "King" Capron took advantage of this situation and founded "the Forks" which was later renamed Paris after gypsum deposits were discovered here resulting in a product called "plaster of Paris". Besides this product, Paris also became well-known for its textiles with the name Penman. Hiram laid out the village and built the house that Penman owned later and called "Penmarvian". Both were owners of the mills powered by the Nith and the Grand. Much wealth was made from water.



Online resources for further reading:

- [Illustrated Glossary of Physical Geography](#), University of Wisconsin - [esker](#)
- [Drumlins](#) (with good diagram) from [The Geography Site \(UK\)](#)
- Canadian Geographic Online article entitled [Shapes of the Land](#).

# TAKE -A-HIKE SERIES

## Article 10

Leaving Paris you'll be hiking through Dumfries Township(s). Named after the Friesians, a tribe that long ago migrated to Scotland from the coast of NE Europe. The "dum" (dome) was a stronghold of theirs in their (then) new home of Scotland, a mound of the Friesians. Their relatives still live in the NE of the Netherlands, in the Province of Friesland. Mr Wm. Dickson came from Dumfries in Scotland. He was a lawyer- we met him along the trail in "Take a Hike #1" as "Dickenson". He bought all of Dumfries from a Mr. Clarke who flipped the real estate at thrice the purchase price. Dickson could however easily pay; his Sherbrooke township no doubt provided him with cash from land sales in the Wainfleet marsh.

Dickson teamed up with a Pennsylvanian of German descent called Absalom Shade. Together they left Niagara in the summer of 1816 to view the purchase and find a site for a town centre for their development. They founded Galt and named it after the director of the Canada Company, the land developers that managed the huge Huron Tract. Shade found the site as well as an abandoned mill which he promptly patched up and operated. Dumfries became a township in the County of Halton, District of Gore (named after the secretary and his boss respectively). Three years hence a meeting was called to choose "town and parish officers" They were sworn in and came up with a resolution to administer Dumfries:

1. Resolved that a fence shall be deemed unlawful unless it has stakes and riders, is five feet high, and has no cracks exceeding six inches in width for the first two feet in height.
2. All creatures shall be free commoners, except stud horses and pigs under six months old.



Our trail projected on a map of North Dumfries. Compare this to Map 9 in your older 5th edition, GVTA Guidebook. To view the same map shown above in a vertical orientation click [here](#).

## TAKE -A-HIKE SERIES

You could have hiked freely almost anywhere had this practice not been ended in 1885. Lived freely too since taxes were a total of \$ 316.- for the entire population of Galt, Paris, Ayr , North and South Dumfries . Everyone knew the laws-after all, there were only 2. Road Superintendents were "pathmasters", perhaps did some trail clearing. Eventually this simple way of life ended as an act of the Provincial Legislature lead to incorporation; Galt became a town and the Township of Dumfries built its own townhall in "Middleton", now Glen Morris. Not even finished, the township seemed to be headed for division into North and South Dumfries. The good folks immediately sent a delegation to the Legislature asking that the entire Township be joined to the County of Waterloo. The contractors threatened to sue if the council ordered the work stopped. The townhall was built and sold, the North joined to Waterloo, the South to Brant. The North Council thus began their meetings in the Wellington Hotel at Ayr.

The many Scottish inhabitants ushered in by Dickson and Shade took it all stoically in the end. Paid their taxes "one-fourth of a penny on the pound" for the United Counties and the same for the County buildings. Taylor ("Our Todays and Yesterdays"- page46) further reports "Sixpence upon every hundred pounds to assist with the expenses of the lunatic asylum in Toronto" (this is not an allusion to the parliament that divided Dumfries! but a telling comment just the same). No doubt a few suffered mental health problems in the backwoods of deprivation.



Hike on! You'll find some interesting facts past East River Rd. as you turn to the Sudden and Dryden Tracts in the beautiful "Alps" section of our trail. Meet a certain Mr. Goodfellow, who noticed with alarm that all the forest was disappearing at a rapid rate. He went to Dickson to request purchase of "a bog lot". Just the kind Dickson had trouble getting rid off. William wondered why Goodfellow wanted the bog. "To make sure he'd have some peat to burn in case firewood was no longer available. The year was 1834!

# TAKE -A-HIKE SERIES

## Article 11

The "Alps" are not quite what one would encounter in the Swiss Alps. Nonetheless there is a remarkable connection. Both are areas where glaciation has left its mark.

We have encountered this glaciation before ([Take-a-Hike 09](#)). But hiking the perfectly level railtrail from Paris to Glen Morris one would not immediately guess a glacial landscape. So how do we know? The short answer is Jean-Louis-Rodolphe Agassiz, a Swiss-born naturalist and man of great powers of observation, intellect and



ability in teaching. After a stellar start in Zoology he began to study the glaciers of the Alps - built a hut on the ice in which he lived for some time, often sharing the small space with students. He taught without textbooks (except for reference) and considered his students his equals. They soon grasped the ideas and fanned out over the continent to look for evidence of continental glaciation based on their experience with the surroundings of the hut. Found plenty and went into North America. Jean-Louis followed and became a professor at Harvard practicing the same teaching methods. His teaching methods ("process" is more important than "product" - this theme became the recommendation of the Hall/Dennis report on "Education for Ontario" in 1967) soon bore fruit in this part of the world as well. Soon landforms of glacial origin were identified in this area and throughout Northern North America. Agassiz' legacy is the "field work approach" which has taught geographers and geologists the importance of painstaking field work rather than just relying on textbooks.

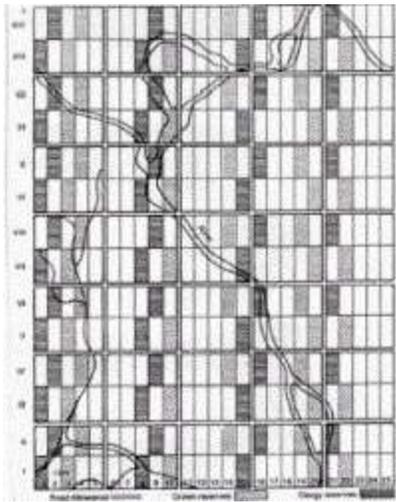
Hike on through this region. You are now at a far greater altitude (from an earlier 190 meters in the Towpath Sector to 350 meters above mean sea-level here). We are travelling through the terminal moraine area of the "Ontario lobe" of an ice sheet originating in Labrador. Present-day Lake Ontario shows the "point" of the shrunken version of this lobe at Hamilton-Burlington (Cootes' Paradise - see this 8-page [RGB Cootes' Paradise Fact Sheet](#)). Other (Great) lakes also show this pointed form originating from a lobe of the total ice sheet. Lake Michigan is perhaps the best example (Chicago-Gary-Michigan City area). In front of these lobes mounds of scraped-up material gathered, in our case just West of the lobe. Therefore we hike over kames, eskers and (end) moraines, all glacial deposits washed-over by meltwater of humungous masses of ice. The so-called end moraine(s) have been given names from the areas near which they occur: the Waterloo, Paris and Galt moraines are all part of the greatest extent of the Ontario lobe of the ice sheet which covered this area. Many drainage channels can be found here as well as



## TAKE -A-HIKE SERIES

many ponds (called [kettle lakes](#) e.g. Puslinch Lake and Pinehurst Lake) and swamps. It's a hike through very "hummocky" terrain towards the outstanding kame hill called Pinnacle Hill.

The pioneers came and marvelled at the majestic landscape with its great stands of hardwoods/conifers and large areas of flat land suited for cultivation. Quite a change for those who came from the rolling, Appalachian hills in Pennsylvania or from the flat plains of Northern Europe. Often travelling by foot, as we do, they too followed the Grand into the interior of



Ontario and came to Doon, as we do, but carrying a heavier pack and looking for land that could provide them with a living in freedom from persecution. Not without a struggle to be sure. The road building in the area was a real problem, not only because of the hummocky glacial landforms but the political decisions were often a hindrance with transportation. If each man or family was to shape and maintain a section of road in front of their property where was the continuity? The Crown and Clergy reserves were disruptive then even if one made a rule that each capable person should give 3 days of labour a year to road building as the decision often went (too few hands!, particularly when land speculation became a common occurrence in the area). To add to all this, the disorderly drainage pattern compounded the problem. Writes Sandy McLellan (U. of Waterloo-1988): "Like many of the very broad meanders of the Grand River, one side of the valley is undercut,

steep and unstable..." Often it called for great ingenuity to deal with all these problems. To this day, Kitchener is not an easy city to find one's bearings, though good maps have, of course, come to our aid since. It did not deter them from finding solutions. Sandy remarks: "...unstable, though not sufficient to deter one landowner from building an underground house in this location!" I guess we'll keep our feet ON the ground.

Picture Caption: Crown and Clergy Reserves were scattered through a township in a checker-board pattern. It is easy to see how they interfered with such co-operative undertakings as road building.

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### Article 12

From Five Maples to Doon one wanders through a transition zone. Kames and eskers give way to sand hills and names change gradually from Scottish to German. Reichert is the first German name of a very early arrival. From the road of this name we arrive at New Dundee and soon Doon. Scottish from Logh Done. The Ferrie brothers built Doon Mills around 1838. Not without some setbacks. One day they were going for lunch when Adam noticed a small squirt of water coming from underneath the dam at the millpond. When they came back from lunch the dam had been "slipped" several meters downstream courtesy of that sand of the sandhills that revealed its quicksand properties here. No millpond water left; no power for the mill. But Scottish willpower prevailed and soon they were back in operation.

Hike on - past the treatment plant and view that memorial tower (City of Kitchener website - scroll to bottom of page for [Pioneer Tower](#) picture + [Pioneer Tower](#)) on the opposite shore. It's worth a trip to the other side and a footbridge across would be wonderful. There is so much history here. The graveyard contains the remains of one of the two earliest arrivals: Joseph Shoerg (Sherk) . A quick survey reveals a great variety of ages as well as blanks with footstones so close to the headstones that only very small bodies would fit. Life could be very difficult here in spite of the rich farmlands that attracted Joseph and his partner [Samuel Betzner](#). He bought his 200 acres for a horse and figured he'd have enough money left to buy a team of oxen and plough. Till he found out that ,maybe, he should have saved the money. For it was soon revealed that the seller, one Richard Beasley of Hamilton still had not paid up the mortgage. Many of the followers had also bought and became aware of their predicament. It took the help of their Pennsylvanian brethren to "smuggle" \$ 40 000 from "Penn" to Canada in barrels and sacks to pay anew for the 60 000 acres the "German" Land Company came to own (which is like moving 400? million in to-days terms). The joy of this success was too soon followed by the heart break of yet another war situation that tested their faith in pacifism and their patience for needed new arrivals. The year 1815 ended all this discomfort but now the climate stepped in to thwart celebrations. The summer of 1816 became the summer that never arrived. Snow in June and ice thick enough to drive an oxecart across. No crop that year at all.

Was it because of all these hard ships that so many of their descendants became outstanding community leaders and entrepreneurs? Perhaps! Colin Ferrie, the miller's son from Doon became the first mayor of Hamilton and is still frequently mentioned as one of the best in that league. Consider the selections below as you...

Hike on!, from the panoramic views of Doon to Woolner's flats at the "bottom" of Zeller's Drive. Aha!, you have already recognized a household word in Ontario and the rest of Canada. Walter P. Zeller is the famous son of this Swiss family. He first became well-known as - surprise !? - a member of the band "Hungry Seven", forerunners and role models of none other than the Rolling Stones, the Barenaked Ladies and other coolcats of the music industry. That was Walter in 1905. By 1972 his "dry goods" enterprise operated 137 stores across Canada with total sales of \$ 201 444 766, -. Other members of the family may have been less well-known but are as happily remembered. For here in Mount Breeze Survey of Mount Hamilton I'm writing in the comfort of an un - airconditioned house in the hot summer of 2002. Zeller's construction built it with real



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two by fours on lots 50' x 150' or 50' x 200' . Basements here were made of thick solid concrete walls and have never flooded in the 40 years we've lived here. It all goes back to being "a people of property "(the little tract sold at Doon states "Ein Volk des Eigentums") and a love of the land.

Hike on! More flats where the river meanders and inspired a member of another well-known family. William Henry Breithaupt, son of famous Mayor Louis and engineer. Also President of the Historical Society in Kitchener. He combined his interest, knowledge and skills in the building of that Pioneer Memorial Tower at the little Sherk-Betzner cemetery. But perhaps more importantly he pioneered the "harnessing" of the Grand.

Does a river need "harnessing"? Well, maybe not every river, but the Grand showed signs that alarmed William B. and caused him to speak out after flood (Galt 1912) or again drought when the Grand was totally waterless between Dundalk and Fergus. Or when the river became an open sewer. This within a hundred years after significant settlement of the "wilderness". Because of Breithaupt's insights and advocacy conservation measures were soon initiated. The formation of Grand River Conservation Authority was on its way.

# TAKE -A-HIKE SERIES

## Article 13

The river creates interesting patterns in the K-W area. In contrast to the nearly straight stretch south of old Galt, a much more sinuous pattern is evident here. The river meanders, wandering back and forth across the floodplain. Oxbow sections and cut-offs develop over time as the river goes through its own life cycle. If you can still find some oxbows in the natural state, you'll find a unique flora and fauna. Home of the willow, alder ([speckled alder](#)), wild cucumber (photo [1](#) | [2](#)), vines and the scurrying raccoons and water shrews. These areas were water reservoirs with micro climates of their own. Here an average deciduous tree could take up 100 liters of water per day in the spring during leaf formation. Thus the river basin had a self regulating mechanism in the natural state: meanders resulting from resistance met by the water as it travels from source to mouth (like a train derailed it zig-zags) widening the flood plain and creating these habitats.

After settlement started this all soon changed. Floods became more frequent and devastating - droughts a match. It took some time to recognize that pattern-over a hundred years-but in 1934 the Grand River Conservation Commission was formed to begin the job of reforestation and flow control within 8 municipalities. The Commission's first achievement was the completion of the Shand dam in 1942. But it soon became clear that ALL municipalities in the entire watershed had to be involved. The Province responded with the Authorities Act in 1946. It gave the communities of the watershed the responsibility of initiating action while the Government became an assistant and financier through grants. Two conservation bodies were thus called into existence. Result:



- duplication was soon evident or feared, therefore...
- Amalgamation (1966) of the Authorities and Commission organizations with the formation of the present-day Grand River Conservation Authority (GRCA).

The new GRCA membership was originally made up of representatives from each of over 40 municipalities in the Grand's drainage basin. Representatives were selected from the local councils; as well, there were 3 Provincial appointees, probably selected with the intent of bringing a larger vision or unbiased viewpoint to the discussions with no local council looking over their shoulder to either restrict or promote specific issues.(Presently there are 26 reps from 22 municipal councils).

From this more general, wider membership an Executive Committee was selected to work with staff on policy implementation and funding. James S. Bauer a former Mayor of Waterloo was elected Chairman; G. M. "Mac" Coutts became the General Manager.

Their first task was to organize the members into Committees or Advisory Boards, followed up with exposure and information about the various aspects of the awaiting task. To quote one of those appointees:

"With many newly appointed members to deal with and put on various committees, the management saw to it that tours of the entire watershed were arranged for us to learn the geography, the political make-up, the cultural and historical background of the much larger area.

## TAKE -A-HIKE SERIES

It was fascinating. I could not believe I had lived here all my life and knew so little about the Grand River."

How many of us do even know nowadays? How many realise that this river once was the Highway 401 of early settlement in Ontario? Yet all should understand the central part the river has played and continues to play in our lives. We should not have needed "Walkerton" to testify to that!

Fortunately at the start of the 1970's the wheels were turning, certainly in the minds of many of the appointees to the GRCA. Land use had to be regulated in the basin and especially on the floodplain for this space essentially belonged to the river. Yet this area always begs to be used by anyone seeing "unused" land. So the question arose: Could these "green corridors" not be used for a walk-way i.e. a trail to walk near the river. People would get to know the river landscape and become more familiar with it and its significance. As well, it would be a land use of negligible impact.

Hike on! See how these ideas have panned out with reminiscences from early organizers of the Grand Valley Trail association and Betty Schneider who was one of those Provincial appointees to the GRCA Board.

# TAKE -A-HIKE SERIES

## Article 14

We leave the expanding conurbation of K-W to our left as we hike the East side of the river. Rosendale, at Cty. Rds 17 and 20 intersection, is, in contrast to the cities, very rural. The gently undulating plains here must have supported a forest of giants at one time. Last witness to this was a giant 185 ft. tree near the intersection photographed by Jacob Stroh in the early 1900's. If the road section to Bloomingdale seems somewhat toneless one may imagine what Jacob recorded in its original setting.

Hike on!, to former Schneider's Corners and the flats that were once a recreation area. "Yoch" Schneider bought the property in 1806 from Ancaster -miller Wilson (a partner in the Beasly, Wilson, Rousseau syndicate) and was lucky to escape the Beasly- German Tract Company debacle. He prospered big-time! By 1818 he could boast ownership of 2500 acres of prime land and progenitor of 10 children and 93 grandchildren. Drop in on the ancestry of the Schneider family at the church cemetery on, of course, Snider Flats Rd. and see perhaps 70% of the headstones spell the original Schneider name in umpty different ways.

Hike on! Towards the Grand-Conestogo confluence, followed by the Cox's Creek convergence, Winterbourne in your sights. Off the major roads the quiet overcomes the hiker. No wonder. The area was envisioned in an entirely different way to the surrounding developments in the Niagara Peninsula or along the Lake borders. In "An Illustrated History of Waterloo" Kenneth McLaughlin explains it best perhaps:

"The purchase by the 'German Companies' ...of the Waterloo and Woolwich townships had made possible the establishment of a Pennsylvanian Mennonite colony markedly at variance with the rest of the province. This was a unique opportunity to create a colony where religious values could be put into practice. Isolated from the commerce and development along the lakefront, the colony contained no Crown reserves, no clergy reserves and no large Loyalist land grants through which to establish an Anglo-Saxon elite or presence in the community. Even the land surveys were not done in lots and concessions, but, rather, simply divided into equal-sized farmsteads without the customary road allowance.



The idea had developed naturally from the Mennonites' past. With a religion based on a literal interpretation of the Bible , emphasizing a pattern of "simple life", an independent social system, and a sense of spirituality that was enhanced by an agricultural way of life, many Mennonites had become accustomed to a lifestyle that differed from the existing religious, political and social values of the surrounding areas.

While a few of the Mennonites owned mills or were teachers, craftsmen or shopkeepers, the majority remained as farmers. Settlement in "blocks" made possible the retention of their unique church and social life at the same time as it ensured large amounts of land for the families of the next two or three generations. The isolation of their townships from the other settlements did not trouble them.

## TAKE -A-HIKE SERIES

The simplicity and independence is still very apparent in Woolwich and neighbouring Pilkington. Both of these attributes can be found in the works of the Woolwich Healthy Communities' Trails Group work. For our information there is a simple elegant well illustrated Guide Book to Woolwich Trails where Avon, Grand Valley, Kissing Bridge and TransCanada Trails mingle with the shorter local Trails like Sandy Hills Pinery, Mill Race and Elmira LionsTrails. So Hike on! and take some of their offerings along your GVTA End to End as you find your way to Pilkington Township and Wellington County.

# TAKE -A-HIKE SERIES

## Article 15

We leave Woolwich Township (Waterloo County) and enter Wellington County. The famous Duke is shown in the county's heraldic shield and flag seated on his horse with sword pointing forward. The motto : "vision and valour". Not exactly the kind of vision and valour of the Mennonites but a lot of white in the flag probably alludes to their pacifist beliefs. The Duke, of course, was the model of valour on the battlefield of Waterloo and Quatre Bras where Napoleon Bonaparte's era came to an end (1815). But at that same time the Mennonites were the models in constructive community building. Barn raisings were a specific example of their valour and vision. The framing of a barn was often marked by all the master carpenters standing on the ridge pole, not necessarily right side up. Once two master carpenters stood on their head on the ridge pole some 50 ft. above ground level after the framing of the barn was done.

The first of Wellington's townships we come to on our trail is Pilkington, named after Capt. Pilkington who became the owner of the "tract" in 1799. Treaty #10 (1798) had ensured "surrender" of this area by the Six Nations. The surveyors went to work to divide the land into townships and their work is still evident on the present-day road signs such as Pilkington 5-6 W. which indicates a dividing road (allowance) between "blocks" 5 and 6 on the West side of the original "base line" which the survey crews cut through the bush often following an old Indian trail. County Rd. 23 from Zuber's Corners to Elora is one of those as our Map 12 of the guide book reveals. We are guided along Pilkington 5-6 W. for about 3/4 kms towards the turn-off leading to the tree nursery. Elsewhere on the same map you can see Pilkington 4 E "taking off" from the base line at Inverhaugh. It does not run eastwards at all but northerly-it is, however, on the East side of the base line. The Indian trail was the convenient starting point of the survey-the river the directing force.

The Indians were still very much "roaming around" at the time the first settlers were raising their families. One such family was therefore surprised when suddenly seven Indians quietly stepped into their kitchen. Husband and farmhands off in the fields, the outnumbered wife had to take quick action. She guided the children into a corner of the room. Meanwhile the Indians stood and looked longingly at some hams hanging from the ceiling. The woman got the point, seated her uninvited guests and set to work to cook, bake and serve. When the "guests" had eaten their fill they arose and withdrew as quietly as they had come. Much later they returned with a quarter of venison, the deer shot with a borrowed gun. The husband's?? Gun duly returned with the venison?? Not a word about that in this story. These were not registry days.



And the kids? Many worked from age 3-4 gathering eggs, picking fruit, weeding the vegetable patch or helping with the chores in other ways. If there was free time there was lots to play with for there were often abandoned tools, implements, pots or poles. They frequently got in harm's way and Dr. Groves was often on his way with his horse and buggy to do an operation on the kitchen table of the farm. Anesthesia was supplied by dispensing chloroform from a bottle with a split cork, dripping the liquid through a towel and having the patient inhale the vapours from the other (bottom) surface of the cloth. The good doctor believed in modern medicine and disinfected all his tools as well as his hands. Since bacteriology at that time was hardly in its infancy Groves' modernity was a real blessing for his patients. To limit the chance of infection he

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used as few tools as possible and once demonstrated to a colleague that an appendix could be removed with just a "hagedorn" needle. He obviously believed in simplicity and economy. Travel time was used to review every step of an operation or problem he had encountered or was going to face. In his book "All in a day's work" his dedication and love of life comes through loud and clear. His life as a doctor in this area was clearly one long chain of adventures which he faced with great courage.

Hike on! to your next adventure at the mysterious gorge and attractive town of Elora. Captain Gilkinson of Brantford was lured by the gorge, the Indian stories about it and the water power of the river at this site. He bought the land in 1832 and named the town he planned with his surveyor for some caves in India his brother had once visited. Multiculturalism had an early start in this neck of the woods.

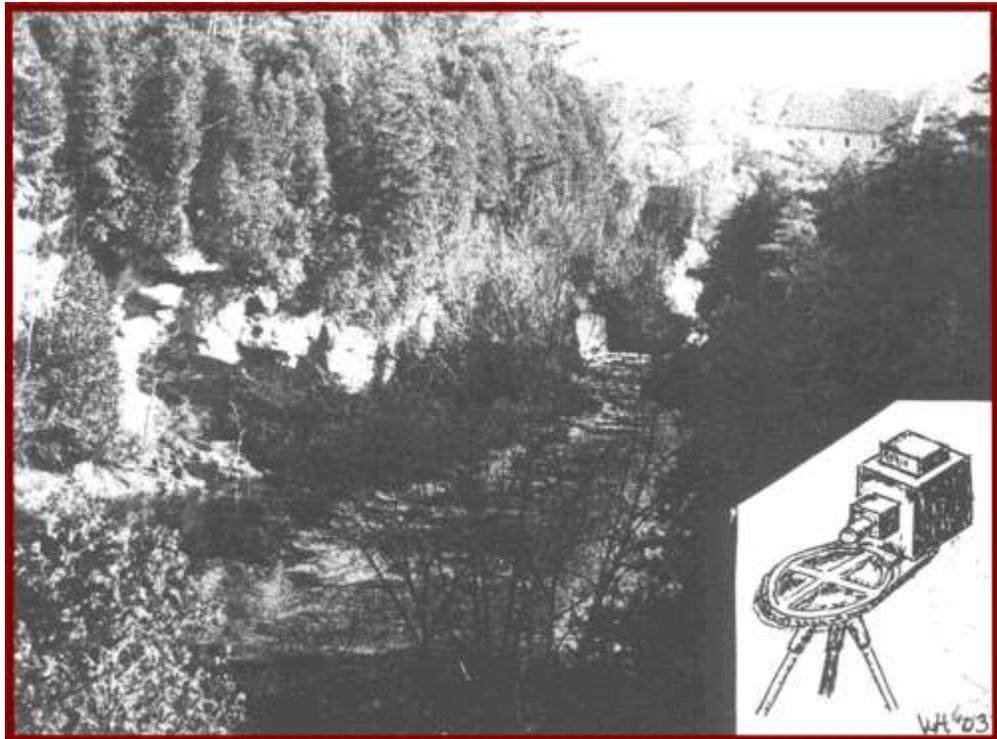
## TAKE -A-HIKE SERIES

### Article 16

Approaching Elora through the Conservation area you can sense a special place. For when you leave the gently rolling fields of Woolwich and Pilkington you pass through the rocky gorge into again gently rolling fields of Nichol and West Garafraxa townships. It is as if the landscape is trying to tell you something!

It is!

In the dim and distant past the rocks of this gorge were part of a barrier reef built in the warm shallow seas that existed here about 400 million years ago. A lagoon to the East and a patch reef area to the West underpins a landscape topped off with glacial deposits which are so evident in the townships named above.



Captain

Gilkinson saw this uniqueness early. His son, though hoping for some development, intervened when folks wanted to use the Tooth of Time or Islet rock (see Elora Falls, John Connon's 1899 photograph) in the river for a mid-support of a planned bridge. First settler Roswell Matthews cut a tree that topped it to prevent the tree's roots from splitting it. Others after him cemented the base. Early conservation efforts(1840's). Enduring picturesqueness.

The local poet (Alexander McLachlin) enthused:

Oh, lovely Elora! Thy valley and stream  
still dwell in my heart like a beautiful dream.

The Connons became the prominent local artists. Father Thomas painted, then went into photography while this technical art was still in its infancy. He found glass plates a bit cumbersome and invented a roll holder film. Five years later a slightly-improved version was patented in the United States. Son John followed in his footsteps and improved the art by inventing the "whole-circle panoramic camera" for which he managed to obtain a Canadian

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patent in 1888 (knowing what his father missed out on). Some of their art works can still be seen in the local museum as well as in the history books.

Hike on! from the famous gorge of the Grand into David Street where you cross the Irvine River, a tributary to the Grand, also breaching the outcrop of the old barrier reef. The first bridge built here by locals David Foote and John Cattanach is another credit to the inventiveness of the villagers.

David and John had to deal with a gorge 70 feet deep and 105 feet wide. Girders to span the chasm were not available at this time nor the hydraulic power to lift them into position.

They told the local baker about their problem. The baker had been a sailor so he suggested to use braces , pulleys and ropes plus liberal use of some his former sailor-buddies, all familiar with climbing and clinging to ropes. The ideas grew into a plan and they all soon set to work:

Large elms were cut, "hewn square" and placed near where they would go into position. Sailors were then suspended from ropes to cut notches in the rockface of the gorge. Braces were cemented into the notches. Nearby tall trees were utilized to anchor the ropes and pulleys that could provide suspended support for the girders. The sailors did a high rigging act to slide the squared elm girders into place and before long bolting and surface-planking finished the first cantilever bridge(1848) in Ontario ("North America" according to John Connon)

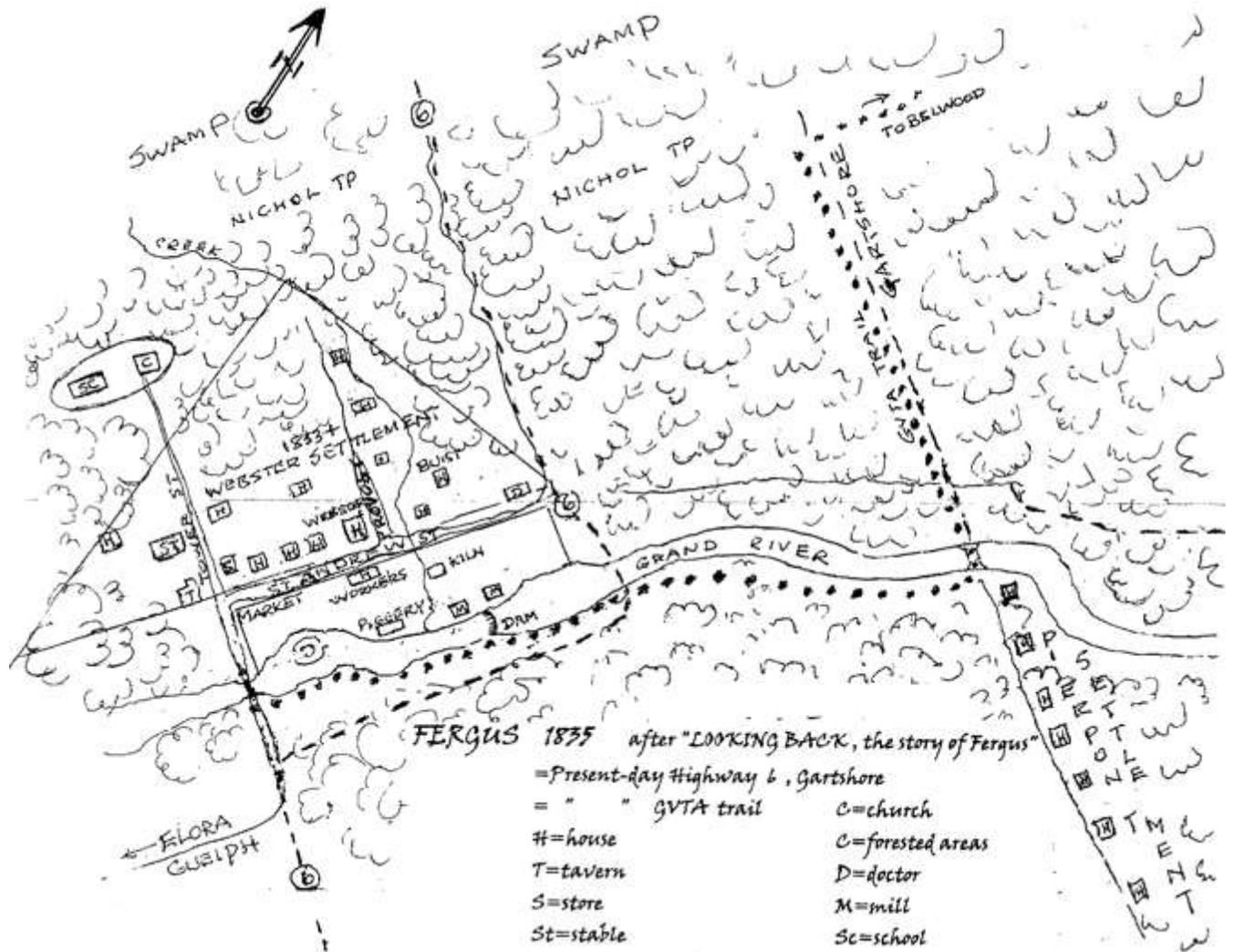
The population now grew rapidly. From an original 3 settlers in 1833 the village tallied 1043 in 1861 (first census). Elections were first held in the township of Nichol in 1842. We know how conservative James Webster defeated reformer Charles Allan, 82-79. The list of Webster and Allan supporters is still available-no secret ballot! The assessment roll just before incorporation (1858) showed 119 property owners. The largest membership of local organizations did not belong to any particular church parish but to the Mechanic's Institute (81). Nearly all the same names as the roll of property owners, voters, etc. and all male. But the Women's Institute was not long in making its appearance. Altogether life was hardly dull as the following story reveals:

One day a horse drawn cart had just crossed the Irvine bridge making a right hand turn onto that present-day narrow trail along the gorge on its way to the nearby lime kiln with a load of limestone. The driver was walking behind the rig. The horse strayed a bit, the right wheel of the cart went over the edge of the cliff and caused cart and all to tumble into the 70 ft (+!) gorge. The panic-stricken driver looked down into the chasm. There to his astonishment he saw the horse get up and continue with the nearly unmarred cart (empty now) through the shallow waters of the rapids. Rescue was swift and the story has long been told and retold in all the surrounding pubs. You can now pass it on with your next hike in Elora or retell it in any of the local pubs. Who believes you won't matter. Elora remains a fairy-tale place.



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## Article 17



We are gradually slipping into Scottish territory. The first indication is Wellington Place, between Elora and Fergus. This large prominent structure started life as the "poor house" and later became an abode for the elderly and infirm. Recently the County Museum and Archives are somewhat of a nerve centre for Wellington Centre, a region created in 1999 by amalgamation of the towns and surrounding townships e.g. Nichol, West Garafraxa and Pilkington. It sits in the former village of Aboyne, a massive mound of stone preparing the hiker for the structures of the Scottish masons in Fergus.

In that town they still have the Annual Highland games, tossing the caber, throwing the hammer, dancing the Highland fling while playing the pipes. They called the town Fergus after Adam Ferguson whose young friend James Webster became the builder of it. Adam lived near Waterdown where Joseph Webster Jr., a distant relative from James established Webster's Falls. Adam and his family's graves can be found in the Churchyard of St. Luke's Anglican in Burlington, one of Canada's earliest churches built on property donated by Joseph Brant. A

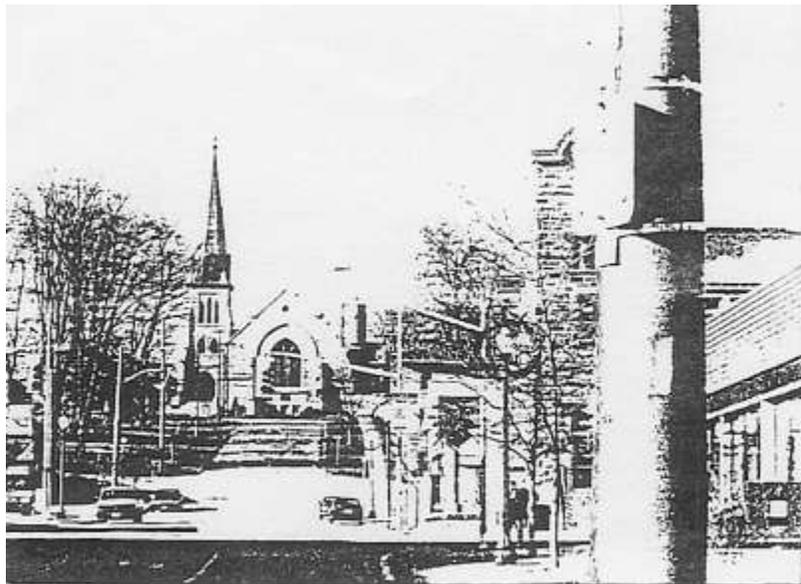
## TAKE -A-HIKE SERIES

survey line struck 45 degrees West of North through the bush by Augustus Jones from near Brant's house became the connection between the two places. It ended up in the center of Fergus where St. Andrew's Presbyterian now graces the town high on a hill at St. George and Tower Streets. Some of that line became Highway 6. The area (South) West of the line was "Indian land" in the early days. Brant saw no reason to retain it and large areas were soon "surrendered".

The waterpower and constant supply were the reasons for the rapid growth of the town. Not without some pitfalls. The water wheel, in spite of the constant supply, had one big drawback: winter. Not that the stream froze; its velocity kept it flowing even during the most frigid days. But the scoops on the wheel gathered ice especially at night. It stopped the mills, income, employment ... profit. The solution?

Light a fire, a controlled fire, and thaw the ice off the scoops. It often worked but as with present-day controlled fires (e.g. to prevent sudden lightning-triggered blazes in large forested areas) the cure became a curse when the pre-emptive fire went out of control. Budding Fergus suffered mill fire too! With no insurance James Webster provided compensation from his own resources for the often very poor settlers. Adam Ferguson lent a helping hand in this.

Yet the town developed quickly. Within two years of Webster's arrival a distinct and familiar urban pattern had already been established: a river-side industrial area, all neatly South of St. Andrew Street (a nearly perfect rectangle-see map), a civic area where Webster with his side-kick William Buist became the central figures. Mr. Buist was often referred to as the "provost", a kind of mayoral position. Provost Lane to this day (inside that triangle) is central to the town and if you take time to look around you will find the Chamber of Commerce's Info centre there with lots of useful literature. William would have been proud of this. Then on the quiet and commanding hillside they established some educational focus. In later years a Roman Catholic Church and school were based in the same area within the oval on the map.



*Today's St. Andrew's Church viewed from Tower St near St. Andrew St. West*

As in neighbouring Elora the Mechanic's Institute thrived. It led to some special manufacturing: The Templin Carriage Works soon produced grain separators in addition to the usual sleighs, cutters, buggies and still shoed horses in the blacksmith shop. Hiking through the town you find the building today at 181 St. Andrew Street.

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Hike on towards the market and beyond to Gartshore. Near the bridge, just across from Allan Street and at the start of Orangeville Road there was an earlier settlement. Much a surprise one finds that a certain Richard Pierpont moved here with his buddies shortly after the "war of 1812". They had fought in the Butlers Rangers during the "American war of Independence" against the insurgents. Later in the "War of 1812" at Lundy's Lane, Queenston and Beaver Dams in a unit especially created by the outnumbered and somewhat desperate British -Loyalist-Six Nations Coalition. The unit was called "Captain Runchey's Company of Coloured Men". When it was disbanded after that war they were forced to fight yet another battle of their own: they had petitioned their loyal government to be returned to ... their native Senegal! They lost that battle for Governor Simcoe deemed it better for them "to integrate". The company was given land in an area just across Scotland Street, then Concession 1, West Garafraxa, lots 1-7. Sometime after 1815 they set out from Niagara to do the required 5 acres clearing and building of a log cabin to receive patent. Some managed the feat as early as 1823; Richard managed by 1826. He was then 82 years of age and died in the Pierpont settlement at 94, a truly remarkable Canadian of enormous strength.



Did the Webster settlement benefit from the earlier settlement? It's very likely they did for few survive in the wilderness to build mill, church, tavern etc. al all on their own in a scant 2 years without some help from somewhere. That "somewhere" may well have been the nearby earlier Pierpont settlement.

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## Article 18

The railtrail leads from Fergus to Belwood Lake and the Shand Dam. The Railway Company abandoned this track in the 1980's after a long struggle. This , the " Elora" section of the Credit Valley Railway (CVR) started as a branch of the latter connecting the village of Cataract with Elora via Fergus. But on completion of the line in 1881 the company was nearly bankrupt and was forced by a variety of circumstances to search for a buyer or lease agreement.

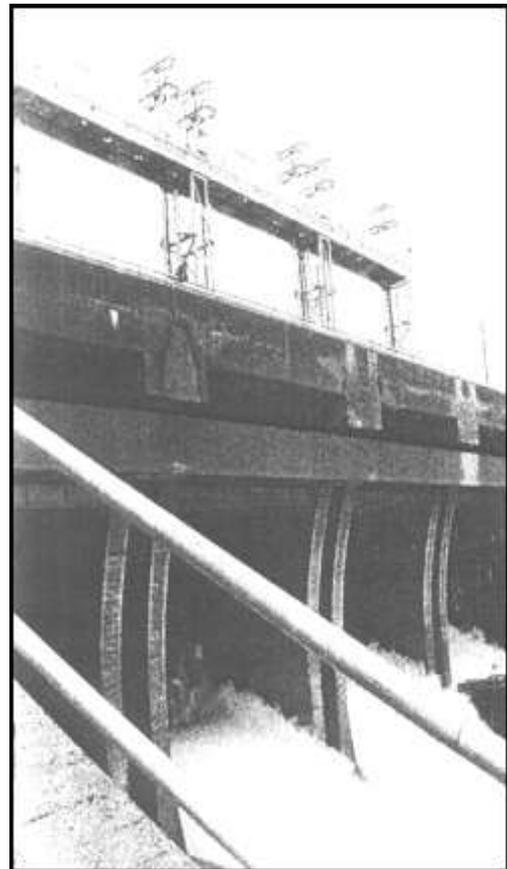
The CVR had chosen to build a railway going for head-on competition with the powerful Grand Trunk. This was one of the big factors for its problems along with lack of funds. Fortunately CVR founder George Laidlaw had a good friend: George Stephen of the the CPR. The Georges made a deal and the CPR became the owner of the CVR through an arrangement with one of its affiliated companies: the Ontario and Quebec Railway. The latter served as a feeder line company to the CPR. The former CVR was then divided into subdivisions to suit the new purpose. Some of these subdivisions soon proved unprofitable but the whole tangle struggled on till a flooding in 1929 forced rethinking.

The Grand Valley Board of Trades, an amalgamation of local Boards , petitioned the provincial government to investigate"the provision of flood control and water conservation".

The result was the Finlayson report which recommended the construction of 4 reservoirs.

The dam building campaign was "on" and the first dam was built near Leggatt to fulfill the dream of that first Grand conservation pioneer William Breithaupt. He had noted long ago that the Grand lacked water retaining basins in the headwater regions. For flow control one needs these and the Luther marsh was the obvious place to start.

The Shand was soon to follow the Luther Dam and completed a mere 10 years after the Grand River Conservation Commission Act had passed. The year of its completion was 1942 and well worth noting because Canada was of course in a war that took a lot of money and drew hard on the resources of a country that was in its infancy as a state, in fact still a Dominion, a wilderness not even a hundred and fifty years earlier. Far behind the warring Europeans in infrastructure, social and political organization. Yet rising to the occasion to battle the flood and drought problem against numerous obstacles.



Grand River Conservation Authority website links

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- [Belwood Lake Conservation Area](#)
- [Map](#)
- [Belwood Lake Photo Gallery](#)
- [Shand Dam aerial photo](#)
- [Shand Dam upclose photo](#)

One such obstacle was the railway. When the reservoir was planned it turned out that the railway bridge barely cleared high-water level in the basin. A new bridge was needed and a cash-strapped CVR had to be rescued when abandoning the service was ruled out. The railway was then rerouted over the dam which meant that rail could be laid on the East side without disruption of the original West side track. The effects are still visible in the whole landscape that unfolds before the eyes of the hiker: A railtrail unlike most others. Not your straight to the horizon variety but one that pleasantly curves and winds past all kinds of gorgeous scenery of valley, farmland, forest, lakeshore, campings etc., ending up at the Belwood Bridge as does the present GVTA trail. The latter leads us from Spiers (a hamlet at the intersection of Wellington 19 and West Garafraxa 2nd Line) off the rail trail through field and along some road (much of that a result of forced rerouting) to the village of Belwood.

Yes, Belwood! This nice-sounding name of that picturesque place at km 221 (5th Ed.). It did not come easy by that pleasant name. Originally called "Garafraxa" perhaps from the Irish "garry fraech" meaning "rough heath" it was soon changed by its first postmaster George Skenes to Skenesville. Five years later a new postmaster felt he should be recognized for doing the town lay-out of lots and streets with his buddy from Fergus. So Douglas Fergusson renamed it Douglas in 1850. Not a happy choice because this town already existed with a post office in the Ottawa Valley. A little confusion now and again which increased with the coming of the CVR. That company placed the railway station outside the village near Orton and named it -guess what?-Garafraxa !. Which sent not- belonging mail from the station to the town and vice versa.

Fortunately the locals had an organization which, by chance, could offer some help : The Canadian Order of Foresters. The "Douglas" Chapter's leader, Dr. Mennie, decided that the town would benefit if it adopted the name of the Chapter's meeting place : Court Bellwood. He found ready agreement and a little simplification resulted in the present name which has served the town well since 1884. There must have been a lot of forest and perhaps some of the stumps are still at the bottom of Belwood Lake. Near the shore of the present lake we can get an idea of the kind of forest. I'm guessing a lot of those tall evergreens.

Our trail departs from the river significantly towards Price's Corners and Hillsburgh to finish at the Alton Pinnacle . Following the rail trail we would follow the rail-building work of the many Irishmen after canal fever had given way to railway fever. Following the river we would soon arrive where many Irish families settled after the potato famine forced migration on them in the 1840's. With our present route we end up near Orangeville where we are reminded of a powerful influence of the Irish : Orangeism. The province of Ontario would be different today had their influence not been exercised from the Orange Lodges that flourished here till only about 40 years ago.



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Footnote: The caption for the photograph (above) does not make clear the giant effort made in those days by the governments of the day. The railway company wanted to discontinue service on that line but was refused permission. So extra strength had to be built into the structure to support passing trains as well as accommodating the sluice\* gates. The strength of the structure and the human tininess is shown by this photograph.

### \* SLUICE

1. An artificial channel for conducting water, with a valve or gate to regulate the flow: sluices connecting a reservoir with irrigated fields.
2. A valve or gate used in such a channel; a floodgate: open sluices to flood a dry dock. Also called sluice gate.

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### Article 19

The website features a \$ 20-banquet to celebrate the 100 year anniversary of the local Orange Hall and Order. The village now has a population of 269. So Worshipful Master Rough will be glad to send you the tickets and even happier if you could lend a hand. Orangists are now in short supply as Canada has recently urbanized dramatically. Orangism was based on the rural scene where the primary chapters organized plowing matches and 12th of July parades to celebrate King Billy's victory at the Battle of the Boyne. Orangemen were always doughty fighters both in war and in politics. They got their Irish up during the Fenian Raids against their own countrymen (Irish Catholics from New England) and in Ontario politics they made sure that the Battle of the Boyne was the first issue on the election platform whether it took place in far away Ireland or not.

We're headed for Orangeville country as we approach Alton and the Pinnacle. Wellington County still has an Orange Lodge in Guelph and Fergus ("m 1158") though the one in Orangeville seems to have shared the fate of Mr. Orange Lawrence, the man who managed the Orange Mill there and after whom the town was officially named at incorporation in 1863.



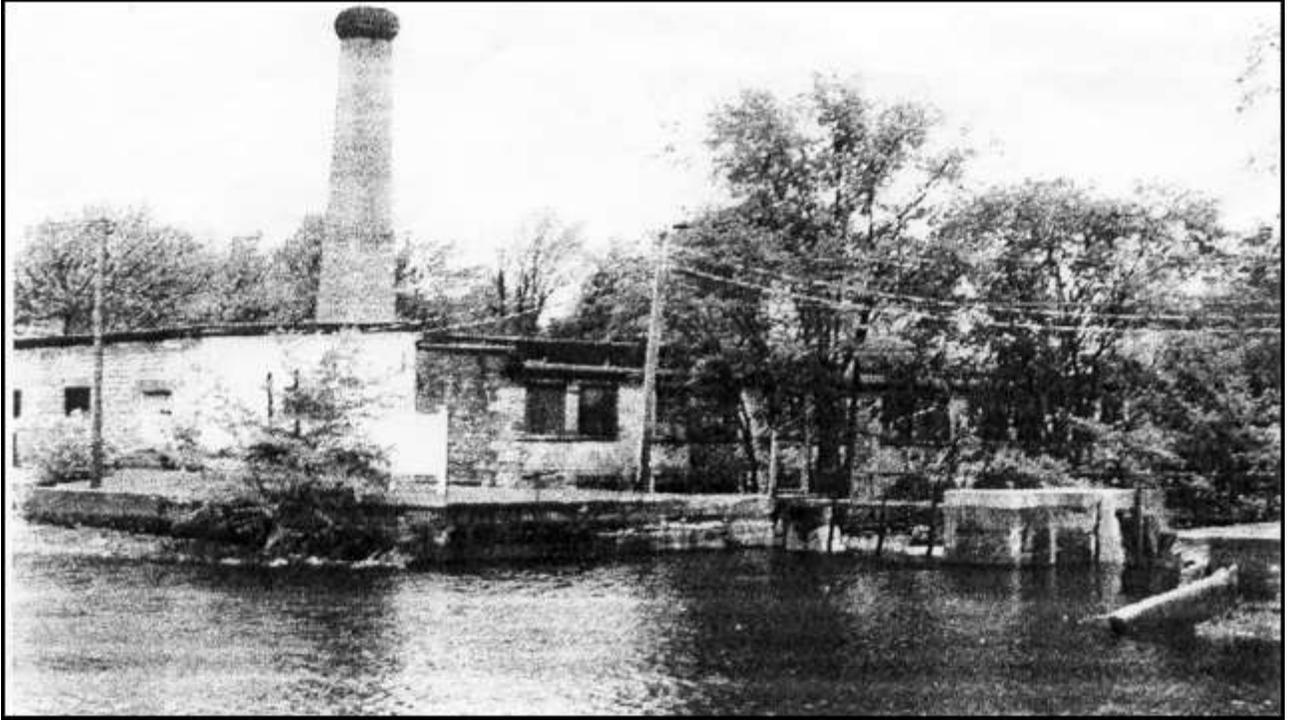
I worked for an Orangist in the early fifties. My employer, Austin Rutledge, was the Worshipful Master of "m 784" in Mansfield, just North of Orangeville, where it still exists. There were many Irish settlers around Mansfield in Mulmur Township and therefore Orangists. I almost became an Orangeman at the time. After all - my friends reasoned - King "Billy" (King William of Orange) was Dutch too. But now Mulmur and Mansfield have urbanized. The 100 acre Gallagher farm I was once trying to buy for \$2300- (asking price then) would now fetch a million since Toronto created "ski-Mansfield " to replace the entertainment of the Bates' Bowling Alley near their grist mill in Mansfield and, of course, on the Boyne River.

The countryside is still the same beautiful glacial landscape of end moraine with many rolling hills interspersed with swamps and spillways. All these landscape aspects are very evident as we approach Alton where the Pinnacle is a crowning feature. The village itself is now somewhat in decline but has a great history of its own. Ralph Beaumont describes it well in the modest publication he has called Alton: a pictorial history (1974). It tells of fascinating calamities and blessings.

Perhaps the traditional approach of getting the bad news first may be best here to describe some of the history of the village:

That was the great flood when the weir of the McClelland mill gave way and 7 acres of water - 16 ft depth - were released downstream. This caused the weir at Dod's mill ("Alton mill") to give way adding 5 more acres of millpond water of similar depth. Further down raged the combo-flood to Algie's Mill where it got around the weir taking a boulder of 3 tons with it as well as an iron kettle weighing a ton and a half. Next to be wrecked was the Dominion Foundry and finally the weir of Meek's Alton Flour mill.

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The torrent was awesome at this stage careening further down where it tore into three small frame houses. So quickly Mr. and Mrs. Harris could not get out of their disintegrating dwelling in time and were later found downriver, the woman with a pouch containing \$50 in cash strapped around her waist. She had always carried this with her to "at least be able to pay for her burial in the event of her death". Mr. Harris was found nearby. The neighbours escaped by the skin of their teeth, their baby found barely alive after the flood in an upstairs bedroom, almost suffocated in a pile of mud.

But there were blessings. One such was the excellent quality woolen wear produced here and the number of people it employed. It rivalled the well-known Stanfield products at the time.

Another was the iron products of the Alton Iron Works which produced most of the bridges in the valley. Beaumont remarks that one survives; "the 3rd line bridge over the Credit at Cataract". In poor shape in 1974, it is probably gone too. But the last category may well have been the greatest blessing to the greatest number of users. I'm referring to the products of the former Algie mill when the Stubbs purchased it in 1935 and formed the Western Rubber Company. The Company began to produce that joy article called balloons and in spite of its aging premises thrived under this type of product. They did not leave it at that. The thin-membrane-rubber line was soon expanded with products that went across the ocean to the soldiers and customers everywhere waiting to be liberated from unwanted pregnancies.

With all that Alton-joy it should not be hard for you to celebrate your conquest of the Grand Valley Trail. Remember that when you're looking down from the Pinnacle at that time. "If" - as that great comedian Don Herron (Farmer Farquarson from Parry Hoot) once said at a pit stop: "ya have n't ben ya oughta go" Of course he meant the GVT.

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## Article 20

Raymond Lowes went for a walk one day. An invitation of an editor of the Toronto Telegram, a newspaper once very prominent in that city. "Ray" was a metallurgist by trade and a naturalist as well. With the editor and five other nature lovers he hiked from Limehouse to Craigeith, a seven member squad spending seven days on a trek of 185 km probing the feasibility of a Bruce Trail project, an idea promoted by the [Federation of Ontario Naturalists](#) and the [Conservation Council of Ontario](#). The purpose was "to help blaze a trail for a walking revival which will help Canadians out of their physical fitness slump." Conservation of a splendid natural resource in the Golden Horseshoe was not a distant second to that idea. Both ideas have fared well and 5 years after this walk the Bruce Trail was officially opened in 1967. The hiking movement gained momentum.

Jack Masters went out for a walk one day. No particular invitation. But Jack had an interest. He was a member of the Kitchener-Waterloo Hiking Club. He combined his interest with his job and, as an employee of Greb Shoes, he went to carry out an idea many folks have jokingly expressed: "Take a walk across the country". Only he was serious about it and meant to popularize hiking and promote Greb boots. The CBC was soon on his trail. The hiking movement gained some more momentum.

Betty Schneider went on a flight one day. The result of an invitation by the Provincial Government to be on the Board of the newly formed [Grand River Conservation Authority](#). The Board surveyed their new responsibility from the air. This got Betty thinking: Would it not be nice to view it at ground level...ya...why not walk it..."the thing is, if you're going to have greenbelts, people don't know they're there unless they can walk on them, see them and appreciate them". She was on the GRCA's Conservation Foundation Committee which organized a meeting. Ray Lowes attended, Greb Shoes, the K-W Hiking Club (Jack Masters, President), the K-W Field Naturalists, the Chicopee Ski Club, the Cameron Heights Collegiate Outdoor Club, all and sundry. Then and there they formed the Grand Valley Trails Association under a steering committee. One year later (1973) incorporation followed. More momentum for the hiking movement.

Dr. Tom East moved into trail work one day. He went to work with topographic maps and produced the first Bruce Trail guide. He also met a lady on one of his hikes and married her. Ray Lowes was best man. Tom and Isabel became a powerful couple for the hiking movement. Isabel was acquainted with Lois Magee. This attracted Tom into the the GVTA. He went to work on giving the hiking movement more shape by organizing trail parties, clearing trail himself and improving it. Tom's First Edition BT guide (1967) is nicely followed up on by Ron Nero's similar GVTA's First Edition maps (1986). The latter started at km 92.3 since no mapping of the Southern section had been completed yet. It terminated at Elora (km 211.9). Another 57 km (to Alton) were added in 1987 and a supplement to the First Edition issued. Membership had grown from 100 to over 600. One year 4 bridges were built. The momentum was enormous.

The threads came together, were woven into a strong fabric. Now the BTA and GVTA are well established organizations. More strands are being added these



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days. The BTA is financially able to buy land; has been proclaimed a UNESCO World Bio Reserve because of the Escarpment's outstanding geological/ecological features; hundreds hike the trail; look after trail maintenance, improvements, and so on. However, much work remains to be done particularly in the political arena. As Canadians we're still not in really good physical shape. The car, computer and television have us seat - rather than outward bound. A drop of rain can still keep some of us home.

The ecological efforts have been strengthened but with increasing population, much, much more remains to be done in this respect, especially in the (again!) political arena. Also here, one still reads too much lip service.

The GVTA has remained a total volunteer organization. Its physical features are arguably less spectacular than the Bruce trail's. Its membership has not increased in the same manner nor its financial status. We have no political power (the BTA has some!)

With these articles I have tried to add a strand for the GVTA. Whether this added strand is tiny or large matters little. I decided to forward a human history that is unique in this world and, in my opinion, could become one of our significant assets. In this valley we find diversity like nowhere else beginning with the First Nations. After the American Revolution they were joined here by the United Empire Loyalists and Mennonites. They were "endowed" with large tracts of land. Soon "divvied up" into parcels for all the newcomers: the English shopkeepers, the Scottish masons, Dutch market gardeners, Italian contractors and so on. The etceteras have become an almost endless variety.

With the above overview and the wish that further action will be taken, I'm therefore ending the Take a Hike series:

- Hoping that the lingering lip service to hiking and preventive public health care will soon be upgraded by granting permanent support to volunteer trail organizations such as ours in the form of a well-paid volunteer coordinator. For, while many volunteers are very dedicated workers, the lack of continuity is quite a drawback in our development.
- Hoping for better regulation with landowners for the privilege to walk through their property. After all, the "right to roam" in Ontario was the right for every citizen till abolished by an act of the Legislature in the late 1800's. It is not at all likely that it will ever be reinstated, certainly not in its original form. But we have an obligation to create a healthy balance between private and public access in particular to our most precious places such as the borders of rivers, lakes and oceans. In a country that borders three oceans, cradles more than 100 000 lakes, ponds and rivers in its bosom that's a tall task but still a necessity.
- Encouraged by the present efforts of GVTA to recreate another, more useful

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trail guide, better hike coordination, hike leader training, a newsletter with more information, better trail maintenance organization etc.

- Delighted that I personally feel so rewarded with the insights and knowledge gained. Even more so by feeling more connected to the place in which I live and the people I have come to admire. Having gained all that I can rest my case.

Hamilton, October 2004  
... Bill Haartman

