

LOOKING BACK OVER THE CENTURY

It has often been said that history repeats itself, and this statement has been proven fact along the Holland river. Back in the 1830's a village, which was named Amsterdam, was built around the lumbering business, along the river at Yonge Street. Not only did the village bear a Holland name, but its streets were given such Dutch names as DeWitt, VanDyke, DeRuyder and Rubens. When the lumbering boom ended in this area, as forests were depleted, Amsterdam practically disappeared, but one hundred years later Dutch settlers came to the Holland marsh and again gave Holland names to a village, and to roads and streets, as they pioneered the now famed Holland Marsh gardens.

Taverns played a role which was almost as important as roads in opening up the country in its early development by supplying food and shelter for travellers and the village of Amsterdam had its tavern, operated by a man named Milloy. The tavern was known as
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THE PAST ONE HUNDRED YEARS

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"Bullforg" traven, presumably so named because of its location in relation to the marsh, then the home of bullfrogs, mosquitoes and marsh hay. Early history in Ontario was made in the Holland Landing and Amsterdam area, with Yonge street extending as far north as the river in the early 1830's, and at the time of the Rebellion Bullfrog Traven was tenanted during the winter by one hundred or more soldiers.

The Amsterdam area was surveyed by a man named Lount—a name associated with the political activities of the period.

By 1833 there was a daily stage coach service between York and Holland Landing, and transportation continued north to Bradford over a corduroy road, while the steamer Colborne took passengers and freight further north, making twice weekly trips around the lake. A post office opened in Bradford in 1835.

Amsterdam did not grow, as did Bradford, and at about the time the latter was incorporated as a village, a man named Thompson Smith obtained a patent from the Government for the unused site of the "town" of Amsterdam, where he developed the lumbering industry, employing as many as 150 men.

On the Bradford side of the river lumber mills also flourished and, according to report, a Bradford lumber man, Mr. Durham, cut the bridge in 1862 in order to float logs on the river. The bridge was repaired and ten year later, Thomas McConkey of Gifford was given the contract to build a new bridge, which was replaced in 1908 with a steel one.

The Big Fire of 1871

A tiny "extra", under date of May 25, 1871, tells an almost unbelievable story of destruction in the prosperous village. On May 23, 1871, a scene of comfort and well-being became a raging inferno as a fire which originated in Edmanson's bake house (located about where the former Webb's meat market stands) spread to the Edmanson store and home, from where, fanned by a west wind, it travelled eastward enveloping both sides of Holland Street. It reached the town hall before being brought under control, and in its wake it left one hundred and thirty homes and places of business in ashes. That little South Simcoe News "Extra" lists the losses which (in 1871) totalled more than a half million dollars. Many of the fire losers lost both their places of business and their

homes and were left with nothing but the clothes they wore. There was neither shop nor grocery from which to buy either clothing or food.

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