

A SELF-GUIDED HISTORICAL TOUR OF HAMILTON TOWNSHIP

Welcome to Hamilton Township! Hopefully this brochure will make it easier for history buffs to find places of historical significance as they tour through the beautiful hills and valleys between Lake Ontario and Rice Lake. Please note that in the text a “**D**” denotes an historic building designated by the Heritage Committee (formerly known as the Local Architectural Conservation Advisory Committee or LACAC). On the map county road numbers are enclosed in a square, points of interest in a circle. Watch for civic addresses to locate buildings and see inserts for details of the villages of Gores Landing, Harwood and Bewdley..

The tour basically follows the route of the two ill-fated enterprises involving the Town of Cobourg and the Township of Hamilton. Railways were hardly five years old, wrote Edwin Guillet, author of *Cobourg 1798-1948*, when a number of the wealthier entrepreneurs of Cobourg first conceived the idea of building a railroad from Cobourg through Hamilton Township to Peterborough. They were eager to tap the resources of the north.

The first attempt was made in 1832 but only got as far as selling stock and having a proposed route drawn up by surveyor Frederick Rubidge. Because of the poor economy following the Mackenzie Rebellion of 1837 nothing further happened for a number of years. In 1847 they decided "*upon mature deliberation*" to build instead a road of plank and timber to Rice Lake, where goods could be transported across the lake by ferry. *The Cobourg and Rice Lake Plank Road and Ferry Company* directed a road be surveyed to Gore's Landing (then known as Claverton) along the route of an old native trail from Lake Ontario to Rice Lake. It followed the route of present Ontario St. and then cut over to County Rd. 18 (Burnham St.). Actually only part of it was ever planked, the rest was gravelled. Because of frost heaving and thawing the road was only used for a few years before it began to deteriorate. Parts of the planked sections survived, however, until the turn of the last century.

In 1853 Cobourg businessmen again made plans to build a railroad from Cobourg to Harwood (then called Sully), construct a bridge across the narrowest part of Rice Lake and continue the line on to Peterborough. Over a million dollars was eventually poured into the project but because of poor construction and competition from other lines the railroad was doomed to failure from the beginning. The tracks began at the Cobourg harbour and went through the town along Spring St. The old rails in the town have since been torn up and now only a provincial plaque commemorates *The Cobourg and Peterborough Railway*.

To begin the tour from the town of Cobourg: Take Division St. and travel north down Highway 45 passing over the Highway 401 cutoff where you cross the boundary into Hamilton Township . Named for Henry Hamilton, Lieutenant-Governor of Quebec (which then included both present Ontario and Quebec) from 1782-1785, the township was surveyed in 1796. After that date the first *United Empire Loyalists* took up land, settling north of present Dale Road and east of a cedar swamp on the Lake Ontario shore, now the site of Cobourg.

From the Hamilton Township boundary proceed up *Creighton Heights*, named for John Creighton, who served in 1851 as the second reeve of Hamilton Township. 1.5 kilometres along Highway 45 his stone house, [1] built circa 1850, civic address #4298, stands on the left on the top of the hill, which overlooks the ancient shoreline of prehistoric Lake Iroquois. A little further along , also on the left, is another old stone house [2] #4410 built in the 1840s by James Weir. Then watch for an intriguing dark log house [3] #4450 buried in the cedars. It was constructed in 1937 for Lachlan Burwash (1874-1940), arctic explorer and president of *Burwash Yellowknife Gold Mines*. He named his log house *Eskimo Lodge*. Its dark colour is attributed to a mixture of corn syrup and kerosene Burwash said was also used by northern natives on their log houses.

Baltimore is next , the oldest village in the township. The first settler, John McCarty of Irish ancestry, started clearing land there in 1805. It is thought he may have named the village for Baltimore in County Cork, Ireland. Baltimore was developed c.1840 by Austin B. Carpenter, first reeve of Hamilton Township, who purchased the south half of the lot.

In 1920 many of the original houses on the main street were destroyed by a devastating fire. One of the few surviving is [4] located on the right down in the valley opposite Dale Rd. #4863 **D** is a neo-classical, clapboard house built c.1850 by Robert Harstone, the storekeeper. The village once had two taverns, one of which is still in existence as a private home at the bottom of Gully Road. [5] The Georgian style *Pickering Hotel* (1851) #4903 **D** was the second brick building to be built in Baltimore.

Because of its large creek Baltimore had a number of saw, grist and carding mills, some operating as early as 1820. The first sawmill was located just south of the bridge as we enter Harwood Rd (County Rd.15). Around the corner at the bottom of the hill stands the only survivor [6] : *Ball's Mill* #9334 **D** was built in 1842 as a carding mill and converted to a flour mill in 1846 by a Scotsman from Berkshire, William MacDougall. Above the mill he also built the first brick house # 2951 in Baltimore. It was originally a storey and a half but was later converted to two

stories by the Ball family who purchased the mill in 1884. Until 1971 three generations of Balls operated the mill, known all over the district for its fine flour products. A raceway was constructed from a large pond above the mill. There was once a grist mill near the head pond called *The Old Red Mill* where Ball made shakes and shingles. It was built by Jeremiah Lapp c. 1831. No longer operating, *Ball's Mill* is now under private ownership. Watch for the sign for the conservation area above the mill.

After leaving the mill make a sharp turn right along the Harwood Rd. and just past Clapperton Rd. the beautiful rolling hills ahead indicate the southern boundary of the *Oak Ridges Moraine*. 2 kilometres further along on the right is [7] an attractive, one storey, hip roof, clapboard house #3745 D built c.1850 by Henry Fisher, a sawmill owner.

Parallel to the road on the left runs the railroad berm but it isn't visible until the sixth concession (Minifie Rd.), where down in the valley was *Braden's Station*, named for John Braden who farmed there. On the seventh concession (Beavermeadow Rd.) was *Summit* where a large grain storehouse once stood. It is said the grade was so steep up to this point you could disembark, pick strawberries and still keep pace with the train. From then on the grade ran downhill to Harwood and the remains of the railroad berm can be seen in a number of places. A provincial plaque [8] 1.2 kilometres north of County Rd. 9 was erected to the memory of German railway workers who died of cholera in 1854 during the construction. There are a number of stories about the deaths of these men. One is that the bodies were loaded on a flat car, dumped into graves beside the berm and their shack burned because everyone was terrified of contagion. It is a strange coincidence that at that time the owner of that burial field was a Joseph Potter.

During the construction of the railroad Harwood grew from Sully, a hamlet with one building (a tavern) into a village. It was named for an American, Vivian E. Harwood, the owner of the lakeshore property, although she had never resided there. Sad to say the entrepreneurs didn't consider the damage that would be caused by lake ice and the bridge only lasted six years. In 1860 when Edward, Prince of Wales, came to Canada he was taken out to Rice Lake by train but the organizers were afraid to take him across on the bridge and he went by boat to the Indian village across the lake. A great admirer of Longfellow's poem, he named the Indian village *Hiawatha*.

All was not lost, however, and two large sawmills were built in Harwood in the 1860s, using log booms to float timber down the Otonabee River and shipping the lumber by rail to Cobourg. The population rose to 500. Iron ore was transported from Marmora by ferry and rail and a number of Pittsburgh steel capitalists became involved. By 1900, however, the suitable timber on the north side of the lake was stripped, the railroad and mills folded, people left for elsewhere and like the other lakeshore villages, Harwood became a tourist centre.

2 kilometres down the Harwood Rd. is another plaque [9] erected at the *Harwood Community Hall #5453* which commemorates the founding of the village and the railway. In front of the hall is a pipe with a constant flow of fresh running water measuring approximately 60-80 gallons per hour. People come for miles to fill their containers. There are several similar flowing springs along the Rice Lake shoreline attributed to aquifers deep within the *Oak Ridges Moraine*. Straight ahead there are washroom facilities at the government dock.

On Harwood's Queen Street is [10] a general store #9632 built of horizontal planks by Henry Allen in 1869, the oldest surviving structure in the village. Also on Queen Street are two designated buildings: On the right is [11] the former *Sacred Heart Catholic Church* (1884) which was condemned for public use several years ago. *Sacred Heart #9606 D* is now a private home and has been completely restored by the owner to its present attractive appearance. The red bricks had been painted dark red but have been reversed and re-mortared with the help of LACAC grants. On the left stands [12] *St. John's Anglican Church* (1876) #9595 D, once threatened with demolition but restored by the hard-working congregation. The plans for this Gothic Revival structure were brought from England.

Turn right onto Rice Lake Scenic Dr. and 2.5 kilometres west you pass *Close Point* where the residents have managed, after eight years of strenuous efforts, to have the wetland designation there raised from a seven to a two. 1.3 kilometres further along in Gore's Landing village is [13] *Victoria Inn #5316 D*, noted for year round accommodation and fine dining. It was built in 1902 by Gerald Hayward for his summer home and originally named *The Willows*. Its shingle-style with *Art Nouveau* touches was copied from similar homes in New York where he spent the rest of the year. Gerald Hayward was famous for his exquisite miniature portraits and Kenneth, Lord Thompson of Fleet, has acquired several for his collection. Two are in the permanent collection of the *Northumberland and District Art Gallery*.

Gore's Landing is noted for its double-verandah frame houses and has always been a Mecca for artists and writers. At one time two hotels vied for the many wealthy people coming to enjoy the scenery and sport. It was also a boat building centre and an Irish immigrant, Daniel Herald, is credited with designing and building the first planked double-cedar canoe in 1862. The remains of his factory, *The Rice Lake Canoe Company D*, are still visible. On the corner is [13a] the Arts and Crafts home #5296 D built 1926 by Fred Pratt, who purchased the adjacent factory the same year and renamed it *The Rice Lake Boat Works*.

Many early taverns were built on the lakeshore to take advantage of the traffic between Cobourg and Peterborough. Several were located in the Gore's Landing area. There were also a number of licensed ferries operating after 1820 to take hopeful settlers across to Peterborough. Gore's Landing village was first settled by gentry who were attracted by its high location and the excellent fishing and hunting. Irish surveyor Thomas Gore, for whom the village was named, built the plank road and it was advertised that the travelling time between Cobourg and Rice Lake by stage coach was now an hour and a half instead of an uncomfortable day's journey. Because there was no such thing as conflict of interest, Gore bought 60 acres on the lakeshore and surveyed the road through his own property to his landing where ferries took on mail and passengers. Although Gore died at thirty eight he had amassed quite a fortune selling lots and left a wealthy widow and eight children. Turning right past the store onto the Plank Rd. (one of the planked sections ran through the village) you will find a provincial plaque in *Pioneer Park* commemorating Gore, the founding of the village and also a cairn for the former United and Methodist churches..

Alfred Harris, the largest landowner in the village, was also a tavern keeper. Both of his hotels on the Plank Rd. were destroyed by fire but [14] his home and guest house, *The White House* (1854) #5290 D on Kelly Rd., still survives. The imposing rough-cast Regency style villa boasts three verandahs on three sides and a Palladian window in the rear. There is another former hotel (1849) #5304 at the end of the Plank Road at the lakeshore, although much altered. Across the road is an old ferry house (1838) #5303 that was moved to the site in 1845 from further down the lake. It is now part of *Plank Road Cottages*. On the government dock is a gazebo, copied faithfully from the original design by artist Gerald Hayward. There are washroom facilities there.

Up on Church Hill Rd. is [15] the Arts and Crafts style Anglican rectory #8661 D and further along *St. George's on the hill* D, one of the prettiest Anglican churches in the province. It was built of cobblestone in 1909 with a bell tower designed by Hayward, who was buried in its cemetery, the oldest in the township. The original frame church was built in 1847 and authoress Catharine Parr Traill attended the first service. Kelly Rd. in Gore's Landing is named for the artist John David Kelly who once lived there. He was noted for his carefully crafted and realistic historical paintings and did a number of calendars for the *Confederation Life Insurance Co*. The Art Gallery also has some of his work.

There are nine designated houses in Gore's Landing village. Go about half a kilometre south along Kelly Rd. to find one of the most interesting [16]: the tiny decrepit Waldon house (1869), propped up on both sides, where seven children grew up. Next door is the 1890's Waldon farmhouse #5141 D that was built by one of the sons.

Leaving Gore's Landing travel west along Lander Rd., an ancient native trail on the *Oak Ridges Moraine* which parallels the lake shore, contributing to its dramatic ravines and hills. The drumlin islands in Rice Lake are part of the legacy of the glaciers although the lake is said to be pre-glacial. 1.5 kilometres along Lander Rd. is a plaque [17] erected to commemorate *Mount Ararat*, the second home in Hamilton Township of Catharine Parr Traill.

Turning right onto County Rd. 9 (Oak Ridges Dr). from *Monkey Hill* one can look over the *Rice Lake Plains*, a great relief to early travellers from Cobourg because up to this point they had jolted through miles of thick forest. Before them they saw a grassy plain with glimpses of distant Rice Lake. It has been thought until recently that the plains had few trees because the native people had burned off all the vegetation to encourage the growth of deer grass. Actually the first native people, who entered the plains 11,000 years ago, were hunting caribou and did no burning. Succeeding waves of native people occupied the area, some of whom grew corn, and many stone weapons and caribou bones have been found and identified. It was the Mississaugas, who came from north of Lake Superior 500 years ago and are the ancestors of the native people around Rice Lake today, who started the burning. They named the area *Pem-e-dash-cou-tay-ang*, *Lake of the Burning Plains*. It is now thought, because of the sandy terrain, the plains have always been grassy and are considered to be the easternmost prairie in Canada. The plains have some of the best farmland in the township but were settled late, after 1850, because for many years the sandy loam was considered too dry and infertile.

.7 kilometres along County Rd. 9 note the two contrasting farmhouses [18] on the right. The first is a storey and a half, cut stone structure #4885 D, built c.1860 in the Ontario Classic style by a Scottish farmer, John Henderson. It features a front Gothic gable window and returning eaves. The second is a two- storey fieldstone building # 8054 with an overhanging hat-box roof. It was built in 1857 in the Georgian style by an English farmer, William Westington.

2.5 kilometres further along turn right onto Cavan Rd. There is a conservation area on the right before crossing Cold Creek that runs under a picturesque little cement bridge [19]. Joseph Scriven, writer of the famous hymn, *What A Friend We Have In Jesus*, drowned in the mill dam here in 1886. Was he pushed, did he jump or fall? He was staying with the James Sackvilles at their home *Saw Log Hill* up on the bank. Scriven was ill, almost blind and depressed about being a burden on his friends.

Turn right onto Rice Lake Dr. and enter Bewdley, another former mill town now a tourist centre. Bewdley was named in 1832 by William Bancks for his former home in England. He was the buyer of the lots where the village

now stands but his development plans never came to fruition and others took over the property. On the left at the corner of Lake St. is [20] an old hotel #5084 built in 1849 by Richard Ainley to accommodate employees of the sawmills. The oldest building in Bewdley, it operated for 100 years as an hotel but later was converted to a store. It is now closed. Across the road at Bewdley Beach there are washroom facilities.

Turn left onto Lake St. and then right on Pine St. where [21] *St. Anne's Anglican Church* #5078 D began life as a chicken house. It was moved to this site in 1901 and renovated into a church with donated material and volunteer labour. Around the corner on Ridge Rd. are the [22] *Bewdley Union and Legion Cemeteries*. The latter reserved for veterans and their families. *The Union Cemetery* contains the once ostentatious monument for the flamboyant David Kidd-Byrne, born David Kidd in Bewdley, which has been unfortunately vandalized and broken. Kidd was crippled and said he fell off a wagon in the winter and was saved by Joseph Scriven. Neighbours insist he was born crippled. Foster Russell, former editor of the *Cobourg Star*, speculated Joseph Scriven was murdered by Kidd-Byrne. The lengthy inscription on the gravestone says David Kidd rescued the daughter of William Byrne from prostitution, and changed his name to get an inheritance from the grateful family, who conveniently all died at sea. He was a wealthy evangelist and a self-styled tea merchant. Convicted of forgery in Montreal, but judged to be mentally incompetent, he died in 1934.

Retracing your route to Rice Lake Dr. and continuing south you will see a Scriven monument on the left [23]. A little beyond there turn left onto County Rd. 9 and then right onto Cavan Rd. 1.1 kilometres along on the right look for a silo and you will find a township plaque [24] for Mina Benson Hubbard. She was born on this farm and in 1905 was the first white woman to travel through Labrador.

On the left, 3.8 kilometers along Cavan Rd., is [25] *Plainville United Church* (1903) #8372 D. It is the second brick church to occupy this site. "Uncle Joe Harris", featured by authoress Susanna Moodie in *Roughing It In The Bush*, is buried behind the church. Turning onto County Rd. 18 (Burnham St.) going south you pass through Plainville named c. 1870. One of the planked sections of the road ran through this village and like the others on this county road Plainville is a centre for the farming community.

On the top of *Pine Hill*, 1000 feet above sea level, is Upper Cold Springs. It was settled primarily by Ulstermen and once known as *Derry*. They built the *Congregational Church* (1st 1849, 2nd 1875) on the left, now marked by a cairn in their cemetery [26], and there was great rivalry with the Presbyterians down the road. Also on the left, on a section of the original road just east of County Rd. 18, [27] a fourth-generation McIntosh operates an old-fashioned general store #4017. It is a byword all over the country for its amazing variety of goods.

2 kilometres further along is the village of Lower Cold Springs. Because it is about halfway between Cobourg and Rice Lake, which in pioneer times took almost a day of travelling by wagon over atrocious roads, this was a popular watering place for horses. Its name was first recorded by Catharine Parr Traill in *The Backwoods of Canada* (1836).

"The outline of the country reminded me of the hilly part of Gloucestershire....Here the bold forests of oak, beech, maple and basswood, with now and then a grove of dark pines, cover the hills, only enlivened by an occasional settlement with its log-house and zig-zag fences of split timber...About halfway between Cobourg and the Rice Lake, there is a pretty valley between two steep hills. Here is a good deal of cleared land and a tavern; the place is called the 'Cold Springs'...."

Allen McIntosh, who came in 1834, was one of the first settlers and tavenkeepers and became the foremost property owner in Cold Springs. He hailed from Edinburg, Scotland, and attracted many other Scottish settlers who built the *Presbyterian Church* (1st 1850, present 1875) #3903 on the hill to the left, now *St. Paul's United*.

[28] *Cold Springs Memorial Hall* (1850) on the right # 3844 housed the township offices from 1950 to 1989. Across the road was the first township hall (1854). Long gone it was designed by Thomas Gore, founder of Gore's Landing and friend of the incumbent reeve, James B. Fortune.

On the right there are four designated houses in Cold Springs. The first is located a few doors past the hall. This red frame house #3826 was probably built in 1839 by John Gabetis, later a tavern keeper in Gore's Landing. The verandah has been removed and the white gingerbread trim is not original. It is said to have been one of the early taverns in Cold Springs.

Further along the next three designated homes are located next door to each other:

The attractive grey, frame, Classical Revival style house with Gothic features #3184 was built c. 1869. Note the cedar shingle roof which has been recently replaced.

This quaint brick Ontario Classic cottage #3778 beside the creek was built by David Ainslie in 1875, a retired farmer. It has been meticulously restored inside and out.

The two storey red brick farmhouse #3756 on the other side of the creek was built by John C. Rosevear c. 1900. He was reeve of the township 1896-7.

Just before entering Camborne village you again cross the southern boundary of the *Oak Ridges Moraine*. This village was settled around 1830 by William Hore and he was the builder [29] of the old section of the former store and post office # 3422. He named the village for his former home, Camborne, in Cornwall, England, and built a sawmill and a pail and tub factory. Cornish Hollow Road to the east also commemorates his birthplace. *Camborne United Church*, #3414 built 1898, is next door on the right. The original *Bible Christian* frame church was built in 1851 and located in the north east corner of the present cemetery.

Go down Albert's Alley, alongside the former store, to find the meticulously restored *Old Camborne Schoolhouse* #3441 D built 1895. The restoration was funded by provincial and federal grants and volunteer labour under the supervision of LACAC. This is the only one room schoolhouse in the township that has not been converted to a private home and is publicly owned.

Down the road make a stop at the Hamilton Township's Municipal building (1989) on Majestic Hills Rd. [30] and view the items of historical interest. In the council chambers there are old photos of the six township villages and a composite picture of all the reeves of the township to date. The Heritage Committee has collected a number of historical binders and books for their library in the committee room. The building is open 8.30 to 4.30 p.m., Monday to Friday.

Continuing south you descend *Behan's Hill*, the rocky shoreline of prehistoric Lake Iroquois. The last settlement you pass through is Precious Corners located at the Dale Road intersection. This hamlet was named for Joseph Precious who settled in 1829. On the right, just up Dale Road, is the only remnant of the history of this family; nine crumbling gravestones in the tiny abandoned Precious Corners Cemetery now maintained by the township.

If you are interested in seeing where authoress Susanna Moodie lived in 1832, continue five kilometers west along Dale Rd. Turn right at McClelland Rd. and travel two kilometers north where you will find a plaque [31] on the right commemorating the Moodies' short sojourn there and also the Harris burial ground up on the hill. The latter is on private property and there are no markers to show where thirteen members of the family are thought to have been buried. The Moodies purchased the property from the Harrises and Susanna was quite scathing about her encounters with "Uncle Joe", his family and their neighbours.

Return to Dale Rd. and turn left continuing back east and across County Rd.18. Half a kilometre further turn onto Ontario St. and on the right look for [32] *Renwood Farm* (c. 1870), originally known as *Spring Vale* #1459D. This imposing Italianate villa is beautifully situated in its park like setting of mature trees.

Travelling south to Cobourg along Ontario St., you are again following the route of the old plank road. This section was one of the three sections planked and revenue was raised by tollgates. There was one tollgate in Cold Springs, one at Precious Corners and a third just before you cross over Highway 401 at the southern boundary of Hamilton Township.

Prepared by the Hamilton Township Heritage Committee, 2005