

Title: Beeton and Its Neighbourhood. Page 1/3

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Description: Excerpt from *A History of Simcoe County: The Pioneers* written by Andrew F. Hunter. This document gives a very unique and rare look at the early settlers in Beeton and the surrounding area.

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BEETON AND ITS NEIGHBOURHOOD.

(FROM THE HISTORY OF SIMCOE COUNTY)

The first settlers near Beeton were William Hammell, Frederick S. Stephens, John Nelson and Selby Evans, all of whom settled before 1836. Mr. Hammell was one of the two Home District Councillors for Tecumseth in 1842, John Carswell being the other. The date of Mr. Hammell's arrival is given as 1827, he died March 1st, 1859, aged 82 years. Mr. Stephens was a magistrate prior to 1836 and also served his township as District Councillor in 1847-48. At a later time the village itself sprang up. Robert Clark having purchased some portion of the land here in 1852, on which were two or three vacant buildings, a log tavern, and a small house and shop, took up his trade as blacksmith and also started business as a gunsmith, though the forest covered much of the land about him, he sold off part of his land as building lots whenever an occasion arose and the place in course of time began to take on some appearance of a small village.

It was first called Clarksville, then Tecumseth after the Tecumseth Post Office was moved to the place on 1860. A post office in Essex County received also the name Tecumseth and this led immediately to what might be expected, the mail matter for both offices going astray and getting confused. As an alternative, Beeton was suggested as a suitable change for this office, on account of the bee trade of D.A. Jones, who was then post master and it was adopted in 1878. The County Council purchased the south part of lot 11 con. 8 near this place for an industrial farm and built the House of Refuge on it in 1898.

The incorporation of Beeton as a Village came up at the session of the County Council in June 1884. The council appointed Thomas Atkins an enumerator for taking the census of the village which he found within the proposed limits to contain 781 inhabitants and the council incorporated it. W.H. Dickson being appointed the first returning officer. Thomas Atkins was elected the first reeve of the village but some inhabitants (Mr. Fenton and others) threatened suit against the County to set aside the Bylaw of Incorporation. The matter was taken into the courts and the case of Fenton vs County Simcoe was a topic in the newspapers of the day. Chief Justice Wilson squashed the Bylaw (No. 379) and his decision extends over a number of pages in volume 10 of the Ontario Law reports, but there was an appeal from his decision and the case entered into the Court of Appeal. In the meantime (Jan 1886) the County Council asked the legislature by memorial to pass an Act to confirm and legalize Bylaw number 379 and the legislature passed an act for the purpose as 49 Vict; chap. 51 (1886) which closed the matter in dispute.

Patrick Hughes a native of the County Anmagh, Ireland took up lot 6 con. 6 & 7 in 1832, he was a pensioned soldier and had served through the Peninsular war having been wounded at the battle of Victoria 1813. His wife was a Portugese, a native of Lisbon. Mr. Hughes died in 1872 aged 87 years. His son George P. Hughes is also to be classed in the roll of pioneers, having been born in the Tecumseth homestead in November 1834, he became one of the early merchants at Keenansville where he established a local newspaper (called the Simcoe Observer) as early as 1865 and was also postmaster and magistrate. Some time after the opening of the Hamilton Railway through Tecumseth (in 1882) he moved to Tottenham where he carried on a banking business and also the Sentinel newspaper this being the name he gave the Observer after its third year.

Beeton --- cont'd...

Another notable pioneer in this part of the township was John C. Colgan who settled in lot 1 con. 5 in 1828 or very soon thereafter. Across the townline from his home the first catholic church of St. James was erected in 1833 and a small village grew up here to which was given the name "Colgan". This pioneer will be remembered as the first "Fagan", the name he signed to his poetical effusions which used to appear in local newspapers. A volume of his poems was printed in Toronto in 1873, written during the preceeding thirty years. They were mostly of local interest, the titles of the pieces and many references throughout them recall scenes and events of bygone times in Tecumseth and Adjala.