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PART 111

Specific Information and
References Concerning

1. The Fletcher family - owners of the mill which was located close to the site of the present dam in Earl Rowe Park
2. The Hamilton and Northwestern Railway
3. Meadowbrook School

THE FLETCHER FAMILY

The following information concerning the Fletcher family is from an article on the history of Alliston to 1886 written for The Alliston Herald on April 2, 1886, reprinted in The Alliston Herald on July 31, 1947, vol. 75 no. 18.

"The site of Alliston was a dense wilderness until 1847, but not a swampy or uninviting one as represented in the Dominion Atlas.

The land on the north side of the Nottawasaga River, which runs through the village from west to east cannot be surpassed in Canada, and the lands on the south are just such as a wise providence provides for business purposes, gardens and villas...

The first settler in Alliston the then wilderness was the late Wm. Fletcher father of our much respected townsmen Messrs. John and George Fletcher. He purchased about four hundred acres at first in the year 1847 and in the year 1848 built what even now would be called a first class saw mill. At that time there was not a solitary dwelling from Mr. Mulkin's old homestead in the west to Sharpe's Hill on the east a distance of some seven miles. To the west in Adjala and Tosorontio; and north in Essa there were some few settlers, but southward there was not a shanty or cow path to mark the way to Beeton, then called Clarks Mudhole.

In 1853, if memory can be depended on Mr. W. Fletcher built the flour mill which with enlargement and additions constitutes the fine roller mill of today." (quote cont. on next page)

According to Mr. Whiteside, current clerk of the Town of Alliston, settlers in the vicinity of Alliston took their grain to Bradford to be ground into flour before the Fletcher mill was built there in the 1850's. Bradford was the outlet for the agricultural produce of South Simcoe - settlers from around Alliston went east to Cookstown, south along what is now highway 27 past Newton Robinson (formerly called Latimer's Corners) to Bond Head and then east again to Bradford. (Mr. Alan Latimer, Alliston) Sterritt says, "At times, some records claim, the Bradford and Bondhead Toll Road had lines of grain-laden wagons extending all the way from Bradford to Bondhead (a distance of six miles) and even for miles to the north waiting to unload"

"Some of the better known privately owned toll roads were in the Holland River Watershed; more particularly in the Bradford and Holland landing areas, which at that time were the focal points for the South Simcoe trade". (Derek Sterritt, "Times Toll on Old Toll Roads" Watersheds vol. 4 no. 1 (Spring, 1967) Mr. Alan Latimer mentioned that the Bond Head to Bradford toll road was of cedar planks. Thus Bradford was a market centre before the building of the Northern Railway in the 1850's but this railway added to importance of the town as an outlet for produce of South Simcoe. (passages from the Apr. 2, 1886 article in the Alliston Herald are cont. below)

"It would ill become anyone who had the pleasure of good old Mr. Fletcher's acquaintance to pass his name over in silence. He was one of nature's noblemen. As father, a husband, and a friend, none had a more loving or generous heart. His humble and scheduled dwelling gave a welcome, not only to those who bought timber from him or brought grists to his mill, but every weary traveller could make a home with the good old man and his good old Irish wife. Mr. Fletcher was English, born in Alliston, Yorkshire, hence the name "Alliston" for our city in embryo.

In a very short time the Fletcher property was denuded of its timber, converted into cash and golden wheat replaced the old pine and hemlock forest monarchs.

Outside of the lumber and flour business Alliston did not make much headway for many years..."

"The hotel now known as the Queen's, was first built for a store by Jos. Fletcher and a Mr. Sleightham, who did business in it for a short time, and were succeeded by D. J. Ritchey, who again was succeeded by Mr. McMahon, who moved to Palgrave, where at an early age he died lamented by those who knew him... The Revere House was erected by Geo. Fletcher Esq., and was by him intended for a Temperance house. No expense was spared in making it the beau ideal of a house for comfort and convenience. Mr. Fletcher did not calculate conducting the house and not finding one willing to do so, sold the property to the present proprietor, Mr. Wm. McDougall..."

"In 1871 the great agitation about railway accomodation commenced, and a newspaper, owned by Mr. Fletcher, was established,

and all the old residents of Alliston will admit that the Star was conducted with the determination of Mr. Fletcher, and the vim of the person who edited it.

Shortly after the railway agitation had subsided the Star changed hands, and was managed by Mr. Hander (Hender?) and others, under the name of Plain Dealer, and latterly the Herald, which heads its columns today, and which is now under the sole control of its present owner and editor, E.A. Newton, and is known as "The Herald Steam Printing and Publishing House..."

"As we suppose nearly all our readers know two companies obtained charters to build railways that could pass through Alliston, one from Hamilton and the other from Toronto, and as a majority of the people favored the Hamilton project a large bonus was voted to assist in the construction of the road.

As soon as the \$300,000 was voted by the group of municipalities to the Hamilton and Northwestern Railway, business became more brisk, and did not appear to flag, although..." (see section on the Hamilton and Northwestern Railway and its effects on Alliston and other towns and villages in that vicinity)

The writer of this article (Apr. 1886) proceeds to outline the businesses which had started up in Alliston before and after the building of the Hamilton and Northwestern Railway through the town. He/she then notes the fine buildings, residences and stores which had been erected and indicates that rapid progress had been made in the preceeding 10 or 12 years ie. since the agitation for the railway commenced.

"...Here on the north side (of Victoria Street) is the Union block, built in 1878, the contractors being the well Greenlees, and further on the Wilson Block which when finished, will be the neatest of any; on the south the Strachan and Fletcher blocks are all of brick and surpass in style some of the best in our old Canadian cities, and the display of goods as seen through the plate glass windows, would convince the most southwards we pass the fine residence of Mr. George Fletcher and land...."

"Many years ago a company was formed and incorporated for the purpose of building an agricultural hall, the moving spirits being Messrs. Geo. Fletcher, P.D. Kelly and W.C. Hand.

The building, a large fine one, was at once erected, and some six acres of land secured, which have since been used as an agricultural show ground and driving park. The fine building was burned down last fall, the grounds being still used by the driving park association, who have made it profitable to themselves and interesting to the public. In 1881 the fine brick market house on Church Street was erected by a company, and duly incorporated under letters patent from the government of Ontario. The directors under the charter were P. D. Kelly, and George Fletcher. The buildings and grounds attached cost about \$5,000. The upper flat of this fine building is used by our worthy council, the division court, and for concerts, lectures, bazaars, etc. The lower flat is occupied by the Herald Steam Printing and Publishing House, F. A. Lett and Co's insurance office, and one or two rooms or apartments to private parties..."

The article gives a list of village fathers from the time Alliston was incorporated as a village to 1886. George Fletcher was reeve in 1875, 1876, 1878, 1882 and 1883.

The data regarding the Fletcher family given below is taken from "A Brief History of Alliston from the Founding of the First Settlement by William Fletcher in 1847 until year of Centennial, 1947" compiled and edited by W.G.E. Cumberland, in Alliston, Ontario, Centennial Celebration, 1847-1947. Programme of Events and History of the Town. 1947.

"The history of Alliston harks back to the birth of a boy named William Fletcher, in Yorkshire, England, April 1st, 1791. He and his two brothers John and Dickson became dissatisfied with life in England after some years and set out for Toronto. They arrived with the princely sum of 6 d. between them. They worked for some time on farms in the Toronto Gore to earn money with which to buy property for themselves. Eventually in 1821 William was able to do this, taking up land at lot 15 concession 3, Tecumseth Township. One of his brothers settled in the Gore the other went to the Thornbury District. In 1828 William took to himself a wife, a Miss Margaret McGirr, who was born in Cloughter, Ireland, April 3rd, 1896. In the same neighbourhood with the Fletchers and McGirrs were the Dales and Clarks.

On this farm the Fletchers prospered and raised three fine boys. In the fall of 1847 Mr. Fletcher and his eldest son,

John Fletcher, set out in search of a mill site, but, after exploring the streams of Adjala, Mulmur, and Tosorontio, they found nothing to suit their ideas of a site. Not discouraged by their lack of success they crossed over into Essa, and on lot 1 concession 1 discovered the site upon which Alliston now stands. This proved very attractive because in addition to ideal water power the location was valuable for the quality of its timber and the richness of its soil. This river was later called the Boyne. Over a period of years the Fletchers purchased ten or twelve hundred acres of land, part of which was in Tecumseth Township." (cont. below)

Various members of the Fletcher family owned land in what is now Earl Rowe Park including the mill site. (see material from the Abstract Index to Deeds the Tororontio township papers and assessment rolls of Tosorontio). The mill pond created by the dam supplying power to Fletchers mill and Electric Light Co. in Alliston extended into Tosorontio township and Earl Rowe Park. See flooding rights to Lot 2 Con. 7 Tosorontio.

"First Dwelling Erected.

Early in November of the same year (1847: see quote above) he and his sons erected a log shanty, the first building in Alliston. This pioneer structure was composed of logs in the round, with gable ends and round poles for rafters, and was roofed with clap boards fastened with small wooden pegs. It was floored with rough lumber and chinks in the walls were filled with split cedar and moss. This residence stood on the south bank of the river facing north at 80 Victoria Street West, where the Canadian Tire Corporation is now located.

Saw Mill Built

In the early part of April 1848 the rest of the family settled here. During the summer this ambitious pioneer erected a saw mill on the north side of the river, and established the first industry of the town. At that time the nearest neighbour on the west was at McMulkin's Hill, on the east at Sharpe's Hill, on the south near Beeton, and, on the north at West Essa, where the Ruthven's, Stevensons and Turnbulls had settled.

Oldest House Erected in 1849

In 1849 a fine frame residence was erected and still stands at 18 Fletchers' Crescent. Miss Sarah Fletcher, a descendant of John Fletcher, still lives there. This home, throughout the years, has been a centre of social activity for the community, a place known for its hospitality. In the early days Indian laides calling to sell their hand made baskets, received a gracious welcome at this home, and down through the years people of high and low degree found a measure of hospitality

far exceeding that which we know today.

Shortly after this time the community was enlarged by another business establishment. Mr. William Turnbull of West Essa decided to open a General Store about 1856. This store which served the people from a wide area was located where the Windsor House now stands.

First White Child Born

In 1853 Mr. Fletcher extended the community by building a Grist Mill, an illustration of which will be found elsewhere in this edition. Special interest in this connection is the fact that the first miller was a Mr. Grant the father of the first white child born in Alliston. The house in which he lived stood facing east where the Massey Harris implement shop is located. It was later moved and can be seen in a much improved state at 122 Victoria Street West, the house for many years occupied by Walter Storey.

This first white child, Margaret Grant, was born April 21, 1854. She grew up, married William Banting, and became the proud mother of one of our famous sons, Sir Frederick Banting."

(One of my informants, Mr. Wm. Broughton, went to public school in Alliston with Sir Frederick Banting. Mr. Broughton was six years old when he came to Canada in 1903 with his parents. They lived first in Essa Township but in 1909 moved to Tosorontio and settled on land which now is a part of Earl Rowe Park.)

"The next year an Orange Lodge was formed with Mr. James Banting, Master. During the next year, 1856 it was suggested that a village be formed under the name of Alliston. The origin of this name is partly in doubt but the one that is most commonly heard is that Mr. Fletcher named this little village after his birth place in Yorkshire England.

Up until this time the sending and receiving of letters was a matter of some uncertainty. With a view to remedying this situation a post office was opened in 1857 in the Fletcher home and Mr. Fletcher's second son George was appointed Postmaster, a position which he held until he resigned some years later to contest an election in the county in the interest of temperance. From this time until 1858 the village progressed slowly, Mr. William Fletcher using his best efforts to aid in its advancement and development. His son George helped in this considerably by establishing a newspaper "The Alliston Star" first published in 1862, the editor being Mr. Malcolm McCarthy....."

"Thus Mr. William Fletcher lived to see a tangled wilderness in 1847 changed into a busy and prosperous little town....."

"In the 70's there was a period of active progress. In 1871 the "Alliston Star" became the "Alliston Herald". In 1872 the Wesley Methodist Church was erected at the corner of Victoria and Centre Street and the opening service was held the next winter. The Fletchers were closely connected with this church supplying the land and the brick as well as many other necessary items..."

"Alliston Becomes a Village

The next year, 1874, proved one of the highlights in the history of our town for it was first incorporated as a village. The first council took charge in January 1875 with Reeve George Fletcher, son of the pioneer, presiding. The Councillors were P.D. Kelly, James Aitken, Richard Chappell, John Strachan, with John Gilbert as clerk succeeded later by J.S. Hart. The clerk received \$50.00 per annum, and James Drury the treasurer, \$20.00 per annum,

"New School Built

In 1881 a by law was passed raising \$4,000 dollars to build a new school. The land, situated on the south side of Albert Street between Church and Paris Street was finally purchased authorizing \$6,000 expenditure was passed in the latter year. The agreement was signed by George McGirr, Chairman of the Trustee Board, and Thomas McKee, Public School Inspector. " (George McGirr owned land in what is now Earl Rowe Park as did the Fletcher's) "By this time the school on the Scotch Line was far too small although an extra room had been added. Incidentally Mr. C.R. Knight a present resident of this town taught in that extra room." (Mr. C.R. Knight also owned land in what is now Earl Rowe Park) "Additional classes were using the Fletcher Block opposite the Methodist Church."

"...The same year (ie. 1888) a fire hall was built by William O'Connor on land donated by William Fletcher. The total outlay for the fire hall was \$150."

"...The same year (ie. 1892) a vote of the people authorized buying the Market Hall, now called the Town Hall, from the Market Hall Company for \$7,600. The Hall was wired the following April by Mr. W.J. Fletcher for the sum of \$75.00"

"...In the fall of the same year (ie. in 1910) sufficient land was purchased from Mr. W.J. Fletcher for the sum of \$160. for the erecting of a reservoir."

"Flood Does Damage

A flood in April of that year, 1911, played Havoc with the bridge and consideration was given to a suggestion that a bridge be built across the river north on Church Street. (p. 32)
A special committee reported the estimated cost to be \$3,000 for

the bridge and \$1,500 for the grading and filling. Mr. W.J. Fletcher offered to give \$200 in cash or the equivalent in work, as well as the earth for the fill....."

The reference to the Fletcher mill located in Earl Rowe Park which is given below, is from R. Wigby The Centennial Review of the Township of Tosorontio 1850-1950 Alliston Press: 1951:

"Fletcher's Mill on the seventh line used to be quite a place in its day. It is reported that the mill road was more used than the town line between Adjala and Tosorontio. The mill was built by the Fletchers whose ancestors founded the town of Alliston. Today the five story frame mill still stands with all the signs of its former activity still in sight.

The old mill road is now impassable except to foot traffic. The broken dam and spillway are still there. The mill office is now the residence of S.P. Wilson. The blacksmith which once did such a thriving trade is completely gone. The most active evidence of this community is the school which perpetuates the name of Meadowbrook." (p. 59)

The old issuers of The Alliston Herald which I have gone through to this point (see p. 47) contain the following references to members of the Fletcher family or their mills or other property:

The Alliston Herald vol. xxi no. 25. Thurs. June 29, 1893
whole no. 1124

"Personal

.....
The R.T. of T. ie. the Royal Templars of Temperance garden held last Thursday evening on Mr. John Fletcher's lawn was, without exception, the most successful from every point of view that has been held here, despite the unusually cool weather....."

The Alliston Herald vol. xxi no. 26 Thurs. July 6, 1893
whole no. 1125

"Alliston Council

.....

Accounts..... W.J. Fletcher lighting for June \$28.00, the balance of March bill amounting to \$2.16 being again refused."

The Alliston Herald vol. xxii no. 15 Thurs. April 21, 1898
whole no. 1256

"Town Topics

.....

A large pulley wheel at the electric light station burst on Saturday night and the town was in darkness for the rest of the evening.

.....

Alliston Saw Mill (add)

The Subscriber has another years' lease of the Fletcher saw mill, and will be prepared to do sawing in the spring as usual. Good work guaranteed. My mill at Thompsonville will run all winter

J. Tuer"

The Alliston Herald vol. xxii no. 19 Thurs. May 19, 1898
whole no. 1260

"Town Parliament

...Councillor Fletcher complained of the ineffectiveness of the curfew bell in keeping the irrepressible small boy off the streets at night....

Alliston Saw Mill

The Subscriber has another years lease of the Fletcher Saw Mill.....J. Tuer"

The Alliston Herald vol. xxxvi no. 18 Thurs. July 16, 1908
whole no. 1680

"Mr. W. J. Gletcher is building a handsome cement block structure, to be used as a coal house, west of the electric light plant". (see also comments of Broughton concerning the Alliston Electric Light Co. owned by the Fletchers, and references in the Abstract index to deeds, to the company.)

"Lumber for Sale

Lumber for sale at saw mills, lot 16 con. 2 Essa consisting of, inch scantling 2 x 4, joists 6 x 2 and 8 x 2 any length up to 16 feet, or special lengths will be cut to order any length under 30 feet. A horse will be taken in exchange for lumber.

Geo. Fletcher, Alliston"

The Alliston Herald vol. xxxvix no. 15 Thurs. July 13, 1911
whole no. 1834

"Town Parliament....Councillors Fletcher....."

The Alliston Herald vol xi no. 14 Thurs. July 4, 1912
whole no. 1865

"Town Topics

...
Mr. and Mrs. W.J. Fletcher left yesterday afternoon on an extended visit through the west and the mountains to the Pacific Coast.

...
Mr. W.J. Fletcher recently completed a neat and substantial float bridge across the river. It spans from the front of the east side of his residence across to the west side of Church Street. The bridge consists simply of a light plank walk laid parallel with two heavy steel cables bearing heavy cross beams of wood. A couple of wires serve as railings and poultry netting along the side gives a sense of security to nervous pedestrians. The bridge is on Mr. Fletcher's private property and was constructed to bring his home within easy reach of Victoria Street."

The Alliston Herald vol. 41 no. 15 Thurs. July 10, 1913

"Property For Sale

The residential property of the undersigned north of the river consisting of very large lot, modern house, stable, poultry house, private water system and other modern improvements. For further particulars apply to W.J. Fletcher

.....
After an enforced idleness of some months, the white mill commenced running again one day last week. The wide cut which the water made in the north bank the last time it went on the rampage has been filled and a head backed up sufficient to supply power to run the mill. The north bank will be further strengthened and raised during the summer and fall and every effort made to make it solid enough to withstand the heaviest pressure of the spring freshets. During all the trouble Mr. Tuer has had with the source of his power, the dam which was built last summer stands absolutely solid, not having been damaged in the slightest.

The Alliston Herald vol. 42 no. 4 Thurs. April 23, 1914

"OF LOCAL INTEREST"

None of his friends have yet received word from W. J. Fletcher and it evidently took him all of ten days to reach his destination. Word received indirectly from a friend who met him along the shore of Lake Superior stated that he was getting along fine."

The Alliston Herald vol. 42 no. 16 Thurs. July 16, 1914

"Electric Supplies

We hold the unique position of being the only dealers in Electric Supplies in town. The supply stores of town have gracefully left to us the Electric business and to assure you we do not abuse the privilege accorded we quote a few prices that on the average are below the prices generally charged.

Electric wiring, wires concealed, \$2.00 per light, complete with lamp but no shade

Exposed wiring, prices on application

Set of 3 - point switches, flush complete \$3.00

Flush switches, complete, \$1.50

Electric Bells installed, \$1.50 to 2.00. Fixtures at lowest living prices.

Canadian Beauty Electric Irons, guaranteed for 25 years, 3.00

Magda Tungsten lamps, 40 watts 35 cents

We are expected to respond to a repair call on a minute's notice and as far as possible will comply.

Give us a chance to supply your needs

Alliston Electric Light Co."

At the Town Clerk's Office, Municipal Bldg. Alliston, there are several documents, surveys and survey maps relating to the property and business transactions of the Fletcher family. One document for example records the purchase of land for the Alliston driving park in June of 1858 are available at the Town Clerk's Office. These show the development of the various subdivisions of the village, and later town, of Alliston. They also name the person requesting each survey and the individual actually conducting

it. eg. Mr. John Fletcher had Lot 1 Concession 1 Essa Township surveyed by Edmund Seager P.L.S. on July 24, 1868. There is a map of the village of Alliston compiled and drawn by C.A. Lett P.L.S. in 1878 which shows the mill pond created by the Fletcher dam in Alliston extending into Tosorontio and what is now park land, and also a plan specifically of the Fletcher mill property in Alliston. (William J. Fletcher)

The following are some comments of Mr. Alan Latimer and Mr. William Broughton concerning the Fletcher family and their mills - in Earl Rowe Park, Alliston, east of Alliston (the white mills), and another in the north west of Essa Twp.

Mr. Broughton stated that Fletcher's mill lane ran beside the Meadowbrook school across the 6th and 7th Concessions. The last time the Fletcher mill in Earl Rowe was running was approximately 1906. (Mr. Broughton had this recorded in a diary). Mr. Pluis who presumably was looking after the Fletcher mill at that time raised the dam too high - ie. above the high water mark - and it burst. "The mill pond had backed up to Mr. Gaggin's stable. According to Mr. Broughton Mr. Fletcher's grist and flour mill in Earl Rowe served the south part of Tosorontio and north part of Adjala. The old mill stones (now in front of the museum in Alliston) were replaced by steel rollers just before the dam went out. The Fletchers did not have the funds to repair the damage resulting from the dam breaking. Mr. Broughton mentioned that the Fletchers owned saw and grist mills in Alliston and just east of Alliston (the white mills) as well as a saw mill on lot 30 concession 2, in what is now Base Borden (Mr. Broughton was not certain of the exact lot but this was the approximate location). The Alliston Electric Light Co. owned by the Fletchers was run by

water power but sometimes coal was used. (see also reference noted earlier from The Alliston Herald vol. xxxvi no. 18 July 16, 1908.) The last owner of the mill in Earl Rowe Park was William John (Willie John) Fletcher. He died in 1961 at the age of 97 years in a nursing home in Staynor. William John went out west just before the Riel Rebellion to look after his father's (George Fletcher's) property in Saskatchewan. According to Mr. Broughton "he was captured by Métis and almost scalped." Soldiers were said to have rescued him - he was brought back safely in the uniform of a dead soldier, but, says Mr. Broughton, was "never quite the same" after the experience. Mr. W.J. Fletcher apparently neither believed in, nor carried fire insurance. He owned several stores in Alliston - these were general stores carrying dry goods and groceries. Mr. Broughton says that the Fletchers went broke as a result of a law suit over water rights with the Nicols, "what with court fees, and the land seized at settlement...they lost everything." (see envelope 12 for remarks from Mr. Broughton as well as information from his diary).

Mr. Alan Latimer thought that the first Fletcher mill built was the one in Alliston, the second was the one just east of Alliston called the white mills (it was painted white though in other respects was much like the mills in Alliston and Earl Rowe) and the third was the mill in what is now Earl Rowe. He thought this last mill was built in about 1885 but was not sure of the date. There is no mill pond shown on present park land on the map of Tosorontio in the Beldon Atlas of 1881 so it could well be that the mill was built after 1881. The mill ponds in Alliston (extending into the park), the one just east of Alliston and the

saw mill on lot 30 concession 2 Essa do appear on this map. It would be advisable to check through the data from the Abstract Index to deeds and the assessment rolls to see when the mill pond in the park is first mentioned and also when flooding rights are first noted. The 1890 assessment roll does note that George Fletcher (who owned the north part of the east $\frac{1}{2}$ of lot 2 Con. 6, the east part of the west $\frac{1}{2}$ of lot 3 con. 6, the north part of the east $\frac{1}{2}$ of lot 3 con. 6 and the south part of the west $\frac{1}{2}$ of lot 4 con. 6) had mill water privileges. Also, there may be survey maps of Tosorontio township after 1880 showing when the mill pond. (check at the Tosorontio Township clerk's office and the Simcoe County archives.) Mr. Latimer said that the Fletcher mill in Earl Rowe Park fell down approximately 10 years ago - it had been built on cedar posts which rotted.

There is more information recorded in my notes regarding the Fletcher family and their property. See the Tosorontio Township Papers, notes from the Abstract Index to Deeds, the Tosorontio assessment rolls, the Beldon Atlas 1881 (historical sketch of Essa Twp. and biographical sketches of member of the Fletcher family), Minutes of the Meetings of the Municipal Council of Tosorontio Twp. There will be relevant material in the Minutes of the Alliston Town Council Meetings, and possibly in the Tecumseth twp. Meetings especially in the early 1800's. The old issues of The Alliston Herald which I have not yet read through may be helpful. There may be survey maps of Tosorontio township, as noted above, which could be valuable.

THE HAMILTON AND NORTHWESTERN RAILWAY

This is by no means a definitive treatment of the significant role of the Hamilton and Northwestern Railway in the history of the vicinity of today's Earl Rowe Park. What follows is merely:

- a) a presentation of some relevant material from sources already consulted concerning the building of the railway and its affects on Alliston and various villages in Tosorontio, and on the lumber industry and economy generally of the area.
- b) a documentation of useful sources which have not been quoted here for lack of space and time
- c) a noting of several questions pertaining to the railway for which answers should be sought (see also p. 17)

Not all issues of importance concerning the railway have been raised nor has an exhaustive search for relevant source material been undertaken. This must be left to future researchers. However, some useful data and a number of relevant references have already been found.

A map on page 27 of the Beldon Atlas 1881¹ shows the route of the Hamilton and Northwestern Railway across Tosorontio as well as the location of the various villages and seven saw mills in the township at that date. Most of the villages and saw mills were on or near the railway and/or rivers or tributaries thereof. In the extreme north west corner of the township, on lot 33 concession 1 at Clencairn there was a saw mill on the Mad River. This

1. H. Beldon and Company, Illustrated Atlas of the County of Simcoe 1881, offset ed. Port Elgin, 1970

was owned by Mr. M. N. Stephens a dominant figure in the promotion of the Hamilton and Northwestern Railway. (see below). Another saw mill was located east of Lisle on lot 26 concession 4 on a tributary of the Pine River. Another mill south-east of Airlie appears on the map in the north west corner of lot 25 concession 1, apparently on a tributary of Beaver Creek. Another mill at Tioga on the north central part of lot 17 concession 4 near the Pine River was operated by Mr. Tyyth Depew. South-west of Tioga (at Silverbrook) on lot 16 concession 2 another mill is shown, (on a branch of the Pine River.) Mr. McGregor owned a saw mill south-west of Everett, lot 10 concession 3, on the Boyne River. And a seventh mill appears on the map, lot 6 concession 5 on the Boyne River north-west of the present park. The assessment rolls show where each lumber merchant was operating and how much land each owned. (see pp. 26-27). The land holding of the Hamilton and Northwestern Railway Company are also indicated in the assessment rolls. The Minutes of the Meetings of the Tosorontio Township Council provide pertinent information regarding the building of the Hamilton and Northwestern Railway through Tosorontio, particularly the negotiations and agreements reached between the Railway Company and the Township Council, the monetary and other support given by the township to the Railway Co. and the role of local figures in promoting the venture. One of the first references to the railway appearing in the minute books is a motion passed at the 8th meeting of the Tosorontio Township Council on Sept. 28, 1872 which read:

"That the Clerk be instructed to write to the following Gentlemen requesting them to meet the members of the Council at Kelly's Hotel on Monday the 17th of October at the Hour of

2 o'clock, P.M., to take into consideration the advisability of granting a Bonus to the Hamilton and Northwestern Rail Road viz.

Depew & Co.	Poda Mills	Angus P.O.
Wilmot & Co.		" "
Yale & Co.		" "
M.N. Stephens		Glencairn
Mr. McGregor		Alliston
D. Nicol		"

carried."

From the biographical sketches in the Beldon Atlas, the Tosorontio assessment rolls (available from 1885), and adds in old issues of the Alliston Herald one learns that these persons listed above, who were specially invited to the meeting, were lumber merchants. M. N. Stephens of Glencairn the owner of the saw mill there was one of the most vigorous supporters of the railway. Thus the lumber merchants in Tosorontio were intimately involved with the building of the Hamilton and Northwestern Railway through Tosorontio. All references to the railway and to lumbermen and others promoting it which are contained in the Minutes of the Tosorontio Township Meetings should be examined thoroughly (notes taken from the Minutes can be found in envelope 10). More information concerning lumber merchants in the township is available in the assessment rolls, directories, censuses and the Minutes. According to the Beldon Atlas, the lumber industry in Tosorontio was declining by 1880 and the population of the Township had decreased between 1871 and 1880:

"...Its population in 1871 was reported as being 1,570 but the Assessor's return for 1880 reduces the number of inhabitants to 1,176, a decline of almost 400 in nine years if the latter return is accurate, of which fact grave doubt exist, owing to the almost invariable practice on the part of these officials to materially underestimate the population of their respective districts. It may be fairly assumed, however, that the number of Tosorontio's inhabitants has considerably decreased since the taking of the census mentioned, one of the chief causes being the decline of the lumber trade within its limits, consequent upon the exhausti

of the pine with which a great portion of the township was originally covered. There are at present, however, 13,016 acres of its area cleared and under cultivation, and with acres of its area cleared and under cultivation, and with the further advance of agriculture we may expect to witness a decided revival in the numerical population of the township, whose assessed value has now reached the sum of \$495,667."¹

The report of the Ontario Agricultural Commission 1880² indicates that the chief products of Tosorontio at that date were grain and lumber, one-fourth of the land in the township was still timbered, primarily with pine, and this timber was being used chiefly for lumber and fuel.

It would be advisable to document the fluctuations in population in Tosorontio and in the various centres within the Township (population distribution) using assessment rolls, censuses, directories etc., and also fluctuations in the number, kind and volume of business, of various industries in the township and how economic developments and changes in population size have been related. Naturally the Hamilton and Northwestern Railway facilitated the marketing of all sorts of produce - grain, livestock...as well as lumber. There is some information relating to the building of the Hamilton and Northwestern Railway in A. F. Hunter's, A History of Simcoe County,³ R. Wigby's The Centennial Review of the Township of Tosorontio 1850-1950,⁴ and also in G. R. Stevens' Canadian National Railways in 2 vols.⁵ This latter book may give some indication of when and why the C.N.R. line (formerly the Grand

1. Ibid., p. 17

2. Report and Appendix (Toronto, 1881)

3. Barie, Ontario, The County Council, 1909

4. (Alliston press, 1951) pp. 33 & 35

5. vol. 1 Sixty Years of Trial and Error 1836-1896

Clark Irwin and Company Limited, Toronto: 1960 Vancouver.
vol. 2 Towards the Inevitable 1896-1922 Clark Irwin and Co.
Ltd. Toronto 1962 Vancouver.

Trunk and originally the Hamilton and Northwestern Railway) north of Alliston was taken out of service. One informant (a local person) suggested that trucking of farm produce put the railway out of business. There are government reports relating to the financial condition of railways in the province, at the Ontario Archives. These should be checked. Private papers of key persons involved in railways may also contain pertinent information. The C.N.R. may have information which could be made available to researchers.

Wigby provides some data concerning the various villages in Tosorontio: how the lumber industry spawned many centres or at least contributed to their rapid development; how the population of villages in Tosorontio declined and in some cases communities disappeared completely as the supply of lumber in the township dwindled and the lumber industry died; and how the Hamilton and Northwestern Railway affected both the lumber industry and villages in the Township by providing a market for lumber, farm produce.....

The following quote from Wigby concerns the history of Glencairn and of the lumber industry there, and the building of the Hamilton and Northwestern Railway through the village. One of the chief promoters of the railway was M. N. Stephens a pioneer settler in north-west Tosorontio, who owned and ran the saw mill at Glencairn:

"In 1853 Marshall Stephens came down from Owen Sound and purchased a small grist mill on the Mad River. Being a naturally enterprising and ambitious man he soon set about utilizing the immediately available natural resources in a large commercial way. He soon replaced the original mill with a large five-storey building. Of this mill only the foundations remain today. At that time there were rich stands of timber on all sides and a river that could drive a grist mill could be harnessed to saw logs. At one time Mr. Stephens owned 1200 acres of land buying it for the timber on it. One difficulty still stood in his way. All the produce of both mills had to be hauled overland by team and wagon

to either Meaford or New Lowell. With this ancient form of transport braking his ambitions it was natural that he should become interested in railroads and especially one that would run to Glencairn. He was one of the chief movers in this district in the building of the Beeton-Collingwood branch of the Hamilton, North-Western Railway. Mr. Stephens seems to have enjoyed the confidence of the company since they set him the task of raising money to finance the proposed project. Also, according to an old letter, he was the central figure in the whole scheme.....

The only business at which Mr. Stephens failed was farming. As the available sources of saw-timber became depleted, the land being automatically cleared and unemployment threatened, Mr. Stephens endeavoured to set up his mill hands on the land. This venture proved a total failure....." (p. 21)

Mr. McCracken, present clerk-treasurer of Tosorontio, mentioned that Mr. Paul Stephens who still lives in Glencairn is a descendant of the pioneer founders of the village and would be a good person to interview concerning the history of the area. As noted above the Minutes of the Tosorontio Township Meetings contain information regarding the building of the Hamilton and Northwestern Railway through Tosorontio particularly the negotiations between the railway company and the township council and the role of local figures including M.N. Stephens in promoting the project. The Beldon Atlas give short biographical sketches of Mr. Stephens:

"M. N. Stephens, of Glencairn, has occupied a place of merited prominence in that portion of the county during a quarter of a century. He was born in Halton County, Ont., of Irish parents, in 1827. After attaining his majority, he carried on mercantile trade in Owen Sound about two years, residing later in Collingwood when it was yet a hamlet, and in Nottawasaga, whence he removed to the site of the present village of Glencairn, in 1855, becoming the pioneer of north-western Tosonontio. Here he engaged extensively in lumbering operations, and when the post office at that point was established, received the commission of Postmaster, which he has since retained. During more than a decade last past, he has been engaged in general trade, including grain and produce merchandizing.

In 1868, Mr. Stephens was created a Justice of the Peace. On the scheme of the Hamilton and Northwestern Railway being mooted, his extensive influence was given to securing the construction of a branch of that road from Beeton to Glencairn a result which he finally accomplished after the project had been abandoned by all less sanguine and persevering spirits. To his business

enterprise Glencairn owes not only its inception but also a large degree of the prosperity which has since attended it, for all of which, beside his fine personal traits, the subject of our sketch is held in high esteem wherever the limits of his acquaintance have extended." (p. 19)

"Stephens, M. N., farmer, miller and Post master, Glencairn. Born in Esquesing Township, Halton Co. 1826. Removed to Simcoe Co. 1840. Mr. Stephens, owns some 2,400 acres of land in Simcoe Co. valued at \$60,000." (p. 52)

Wigby comments on other villages involved in lumbering, through or near which the railway passed - eg. Lisle, Airlie, Tioga, Silverbrook, Everett:

Lisle

"Prior to the founding of Lisle, Sanford Gale of Princeton operated Saw mills in the district - Balajos on Beaver Creek on Lot 26, Concession 4. The father of W. J. Wood, Reeve of Essa, worked as sawyer at this mill. "The Beaver" was another mill community on the Pine River on Lot 23 Concession 5. This was a fairly large community having a Public School and a Church... With the coming of the railroad the village grew as a shipping centre for lumber, wood, grain and other produce...." (p. 53)

Airlie

"Near the west townline there was another mill community called Airlie. In more stirring times there used to be a mill, a blacksmith shop, a store and a hotel at the corner of the west town line and 25 side road. It seems impossible today that the mill was once water driven by a good sized stream. After the timber was cut off, both stream and the community disappeared. Even the name is almost gone..."

Tioga

"Tioga, which was mentioned in the article on "Silverbrook" was also a thriving mill community. The lumber mill here was operated by Mr. Depew. A noted story teller of this mill was William Synott whose descendants still live in this township. All that is left now of this lumbering community is a little station standing forlornly along the weedy railroad track near the junction of the fourth line and 20 side road." (p. 59)

Silverbrook

"The community of Silverbrook began as a lumbering centre. Neither the date of the opening of the first mill nor its first owners are at present available. Today it is popularly known as "Brennans' Mill." Around this mill at one time was a community of 300 people all engaged in lumbering or indirectly concerned with lumbering." (p. 55 quote continued below)

A saw mill on the east side of lot 16 concession 2 is shown on the map of Tosorontio in the Beldon Atlas p. 27. And the 1885 assessment roll of Tosorontio indicates that the Brennans' owned 7,100 acres in lots 14-18 in the first and second concessions. Wigby describes in some detail the saw mill operations at Silverbrook:

"Unlike most of the mills in the district, the Silverbrook mill was a steam powered mill. In conjunction with its lumbering activity was a shingle and lath mill. Logs for the mill were cut as far west as the seventh line of Mulmur and the logs hauled to the mill up the Pine River Valley. In winter the logs were drawn by sleighs but in the summer two tram cars operating on wooden rails were used to haul logs to the mill. The greater percentage of logs were hauled in winter. There was a mill pond at the mill and logs would be piled up on the ice until there was no more room. Then all the available space in the mill yard was used. When the ice went out of the pond in spring the logs were floated up to the mill to be fed to the saws by means of a "Slush Chain". This was a conveyor belt device having a series of spikes on it to grasp the logs and feed them up the sloping gangway to the saws. The waste cuttings were fed out the other side of the mill by another "Slush Chain" to a kiln where they were burned. The capacity of the mill was such that the kiln was burned both day and night. The finished products were at first hauled to Angus (a station on the Northern Railway as of ca. 1854) but with the coming of the railway, (the Hamilton and Northwestern Railway, built 1877) a spurline was run into the mill and the produce shipped directly to Toronto and other places. The number "6" must have had a particular charm since the mill operated 6 days per week and from 6 in the morning until 6 at night. Huge coal oil lamps were used for light on winter days.

At the height of the mills activity there were 33 houses, a store, blacksmith shop, a large boarding house and a school. The whole community was owned by Brennans, even to the store...

The chief landmark of the once flourishing community is the school, although there is still evidence of the mill in view. The school's closed now and the children are taken to Clougher by bus. The mill has been moved long since to Kearney in the Muskoka Lakes district where it was again operated by Brennans. Apart from a few farms operated by Polish immigrants and an occasional tobacco farm there is little left of the glories of what used to be.

The Pine Valley is once more left to the processes of nature and again the pines and hardwoods are struggling back to their former glory. To aid these natural processes the Provincial

Government has established a forest station known as Dufferin Forest. It may be that the young people living today will yet see the day when lumbering on a smaller and less destructive scale will be carried on at Silverbrook..." (pp. 55, 57 & 59 underlining and brackets mine)

No. 7 Silverbrook School

"The school is said to be about sixty-five years old or built about 1885. It was built by the Brennan people when lumbering was a great industry here. Mr. Brennan owned the land and the mill. He employed many men and had the school built for the children. As many as sixty children used to attend.

The school is not in its first location..." (p. 89)

"Another small community in the making which seems to have died an early but natural death, was the little community at the corner of the third line and 10 sideroad. At one time there was a hotel there and a general store. In those days a man could get both himself and his horse fed for 25 cents. Today 25 cents would be hardly sufficient to tip the waitress let alone buy a meal for both horse and man."

Everett

"The actual beginning of Everett is uncertain but before 1878 there was a community at the corner of the 7th line and 10 sideroad. There are two traditions as to how Everett got its name. One tradition claims that Mr. Fisher, who owned the Jackson farm at that time, called his farm "Everett." The second tradition has it that Mr. Henry Baycroft gave the community its name after his old home in England. In any event when the railroad came through, the community called "Everett" picked itself up and moved closer to this new and wonderful link with the outside world. As a result the old site is now known as "Old Everett" while "New Everett" carries on bearing many of the land marks of pioneer days...." (p. 43)

"The merchants of the day had an organization called "The Grange", later "The Patrons of Industry". This organization, with district headquarters at Angus (then a thriving centre) seems to have been a merchants co-operative of small business from manufacturers and wholesalers.....

When the lumbering business was strong in the north and the township's seven mills were operating at full capacity Everett used to be the business centre of the township. The

Dufferin House often had as many as 15 lumberjacks sleeping on the barroom floor while seeking employment at the mills. There is also a grain elevator which still stands and is still used even though these buildings have largely disappeared from the Ontario countryside.

There were also two branch banks here, the Home Bank and the Bank of Toronto. The Home Bank collapsed in a panic and the Bank of Toronto operates one day a week....." (pp. 45, 47 & 49)

Wigby also quotes a poem about Everett printed in the Alliston Herald in 1891, which was said to be "illustrative of Everett in the days of its glory". (see p. 49)

The building of the Hamilton and Northwestern Railway through Alliston and the effects of the railway on the development of that village are discussed by several sources which have been consulted to date.

According to Mr. Alan Latimer, Rosemont was founded considerably before Alliston, ie. in about 1835, and for a number of years thereafter was the larger centre. In fact, he said, the Tosorontio fall fairs used to be held in Rosemont and only later were celebrated in Alliston. It would be well to document and compare the population figures for these two villages using censuses, assessment rolls, or directories. Rosemont is located in the south-west corner of Tosorontio and lies partly in Mulmur. The Centennial booklet on Mulmur states that the southern portion of that township was settled initially and "the first settlement of any size was in the south east corner of the township, near Rosemont." (p. 6) The population of Rosemont by about 1851 was purportedly 140 residents. (Unfortunately the author(s) of the

Centennial booklet do not state their source here.) A directory of the Province published in 1869 indicates that by that date Alliston had a population of 175 whereas the population of Rosemont was 100.¹

The Hamilton and Northwestern Railway built in the 70's may have given an even greater advantage to Alliston. By 1889 Alliston had a population of 1800 whereas Rosemont was a village of 200.² The fall fairs were being held in Alliston by the 1880's if not earlier. The railway facilitated the transport of farm produce to the fair in Alliston. Among Mr. Alan Latimer's historical papers and documents was a notice of 1893 stating that the Grand Trunk Railway Company (formerly the Hamilton and Northwestern Railway) would offer reduced rates to persons participating in the fair:

" \$2,000 in prizes
1893
Prize List
of the

Tosorontio Union Agricultural Exhibition to be held in the Town of Alliston on Thursday and Friday October 5 and 6. The Grand Trunk Railway Company will issue Return Tickets from Collingwood, Barrie, Caledon East and Intermediate Points at a Fare and a Third good to return till the 7th of October. The Company will also Return Stock that has been shewn at the Exhibition Free of charge, provided they remain the property of the Exhibitor.

Alliston Herald Print"

It could not be said that the railway caused the rapid development of Alliston. As seen above Alliston was already surpassing Rosemont

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1. The Province of Ontario Gazeteer and Directory (Toronto: ed H. McEvoy, published by Robertson and Cook, 1869) pp. 23 & 416
 2. Ontario Gazeteer and Business Directory 1888-89 (Toronto: R. L. Polk and Co., 1889) pp.

and other village in the vicinity in population size by 1869. (and in the number of businesses, industries and professional persons, although there has not been time to document this - see directories, newspapers, assessment rolls, censuses...) Also, other centres on the route of the Hamilton and Northwestern Railway - Everett, Glencairn, Lisle, Tioga - although they benefited from the railway, did not expand to the same extent as Alliston. In 1888 Glencairn had a population of 150, Tioga 200, Everett 150.¹ However, the railway certainly facilitated the expansion of the population and industries in Alliston. The following quotes relate to the history of Alliston and particularly to the rapid development of the village-town once plans for the Hamilton and Northwestern Railway were set in motion. The first excerpts are from an article on the history of Alliston published in The Alliston Herald on April 2, 1886 reprinted in the same newspaper on Thursday July 31, 1947, vol. 75 no. 18. Information from this article pertaining to the founding of the village site of Alliston by William Fletcher in 1847 and to the early history of the village was given in the section on the Fletcher family see pp. 57-63.

"Outside the lumber and flour business Alliston did not make much headway for many years...

About the year 1869, the old Vulcan foundry was started by Messrs. Aitken, Knight and Crossly, and gave a great impetus to business...

In 1871 the great agitation about railway accomodation commenced, and a newspaper, owned by Mr. Fletcher, was established, and all the old residents of Alliston will admit that the Star was conducted with the determination of Mr. Fletcher, and the vim of

1. Ibid.,

the person who edited it.

Shortly after the railway agitation had subsided the Star changed hands, and was managed by Mr. Hander.....

As we suppose nearly all our readers know two companies obtained charters to build railways that could pass through Alliston one from Hamilton and the other from Toronto, and as a majority of the people favored the Hamilton project a large bonus was voted to assist in the construction of the road.

As soon as the \$300,000 was voted by the group of municipalities to the Hamilton and Northwestern Railway, business became more brisk, and did not appear to flag although the company owing to its then financial standing, could not or would not continue the building of the road from Georgetown northwards for a long time, and although they had received the \$300,000 in consideration of building the line to Collingwood, as well as that to Barrie, they did not appear to be willing to build the line to Collingwood without additional assistance, when rather than be deprived of the accomodation so long and anxiously looked for, Alliston voted the company an additional \$8,000, and very soon afterwards, in the fall of 1877 the iron horse travelled into and through the village..."

The author of the article proceeds to outline when various businesses were started up in Alliston, when numerous buildings were erected, and other signs of the rapid development of the village within twelve years. Some of the stores and homes mentioned, belonged to persons owning land which is now part of Earl Rowe Park:

"...Westward on Wellington and on Nelson Streets are the fine residences of Messrs. Duncan, Egan, Dickson, Hood, McMahon and others, all erected during the past two seasons. These buildings are all first class brick ones, and no pains or cost has been spared in building them, or in making them comfortable and pleasing to the eye. Some really fine frame residences have also been erected during the past year or two. Many years ago a company was formed and incorporated for the purpose of building an agricultural hall..."

A list is given of village "fathers" from incorporation of the village in 1875 to 1886: This is followed by the information given below:

"...At the time the village was incorporated, (ie. 1875) the town did not exceed 780, so that in the short space of eleven years it has nearly trepled its population, which now may be set down at 2,000. It is more than probable that in less than a year it will be incorporated as a town. What a change in a few short

years. Thirty eight years ago, not a human habitation for miles on any side, and fifteen years ago, a population of about 240, and today about 2,000 of a prosperous, industrious and contented people..."

Many churches were built during this period and the author gives a brief history of these. He concludes with a "contemporary" picture of Alliston as seen in 1886 when he was writing the article:

"Alliston at present comprises two large elevators, capable of holding 60,000 bushels, and three large grain ware sheds, a large agricultural implement foundry, one of the finest schools in the province, two flour mills and sash and door factories, two shingle mills, one pump factory, two excellent woolen mill store, one saw mill, two livery stables, carriage factory, an importer of carriages and buggies, two tanneries, two brick yards, five blacksmith's shops, fine roller rink, telegraph and telephone connestions with the outer world, fine agricultural grounds, three practicing physicians, two dental surgeons, two practicing lawyers, the best auctioneer in the county, and one who is able to work up a sale to the very best advantage, eight excellent general stores (mostly all plate glass fronts), dealing in dry goods, groceries, boots and shoes etc., four grocery stores, two flour, feed and grocery stores, two drug stores with the expectation of a third, three boot and shoe stores, two bakery establishments, two hardware stores, two furniture stores, three stove and tin shops, a merchant tailoring establishment, several dress and mantle making implement agency, cooper shop, two book stores and fancy goods in connection, a photograph gallery and fancy store in connection, two oyster parlors, two jewellery establishments, two barber shops, a land, loan and insurance agency, several insurance agencies, musical instrument store, two gardeners, two undertakers, a very nicely situated cemetary, also the following lodges: Masonic, A.O.U.W., L.O.L., I.O.O.F. and I.O.G.T. The fine churches were previously referred to.

Nearly all these buildings and shops have been erected and our business men cast their lots in Alliston within the past twelve or thirteen years, thus giving outsiders some idea of its rapid growth."

The material below is from "A Brief History of Alliston from the Founding of the First Settlement by William Fletcher in 1847 until year of Centennial, 1947" compiled and edited by W.G.E. Cumberland, in Alliston, Ontario, Centennial Celebrations, 1847-1947 Programme of Events and History of the Town 1947:

"Foundry Built

In 1868 Messrs. Aitken, Knight and Crossley established a foundry and agricultural works about 6 Church Street North of where McQuigge's implement shop now stands. Mr. John Wilson later took Mr. Crossley's place in the firm. Since then the progress of the village has been a march of successful business enterprises.

Thus Mr. William Fletcher lived to see a tangled wilderness in 1847 changed into a busy and prosperous little town. The stately hardwood trees that were felled to clear the land were reduced to ashes in large bonfires. These ashes were shipped to processing plants in the United States for the making of potash.

In the 70's there was a period of active progress.....

About this time the people of Alliston were thrilled by the possibility of having a railway, thrilled to the extent that they were going to issue debentures to the tune of \$8,000 to assist the North Simcoe Railway Company. This railway was run from Penetanguishene through Alliston to a point in the Toronto Gray and Bruce Railway. This venture did not materialize but an agreement, the oldest made by the town was signed by Reeve John Stewart and the Hamilton and North Western Railway. In this agreement Alliston promised \$8,000 to aid in building a railroad from Clarkesville, now Beeton to Glencairn before November 1st, 1877 the first train to run on or before January the first, 1878. The town had no other debt besides this \$8,000/ The H. and N.W. became the Grand Trunk and the Grand Trunk in turn became the C.N.R. which still serves the town. The council indicated its wish to encourage industry and granted ten years free taxes to the woolen mill. Late that same year or early in the following year the business section of the village fell prey to the fire demon.....

Later developments in the 80's included the acquiring of a Driving Park....In 1888 a street watering apparatus was purchased for the sum of \$30.00....The same year a fire hall was built by William O'Connor on land donated by William Fletcher. The total outlay for the fire hall was \$150. In the same year Mr. Johnson received a dollar a week for lighting the street lamps, and Mr. Squares acted as Constable for nothing.

In 1889 the Mercher Brothers were induced to come to town by granting them exemptions from taxation for a period of five

years. This company occupied the large building at the south end of Paris Street where they manufactured many agricultural implements of high quality. Unfortunately, they changed the knots on their binder and this proved very unsatisfactory, so unsatisfactory that a shipment to South Africa proved fatal to the firm's finances.

In 1890 the problem of having electric lights came up and it was finally decided, after much deliberation, to have five lights installed. The lights were to be on 313 night a year at a of 90 cents a night.

Incorporated as a Town

The year 1891 was possibly the most important year in Alliston's existence. In the first place, on January the first it became a town on proclamation of the Lieutenant Governor in Council. The first town Council was made up of John Stewart, Mayor, Dr. James Sutherland, Reeve, and Councillors John Moore, George McGirr, John P. Wilson, William Hutchinson, Thomas O'Calaghan, W.I. Clarke, James Jerrett, Henry Longeway, and C. C. Lee.

Fire Takes Toll

This same year Alliston received its greatest setback. On Friday, May 8, 1891, at twelve forty-five midday, fire originated in the stables of the Queen's Hotel, now the Windsor House, and fanned by the high winds spread in a few minutes to the business establishments in the east and across the street. Mayor Stewart telegraphed to outside towns for assistance. The Collingwood fire brigade left immediately on a special train with their fire engine but before they could arrive the wind had spread the fire south and east. The fire consumed everything on the north side of the street to the river from the Queen's Hotel to the Bank of Hamilton where it stopped leaving the Methodist Church untouched. On the south side of the street the fire carried on, finally extending to Wellington Street, demolishing buildings as far east as Dufferin Street. About three o'clock the Collingwood Fire Brigade arrived and was hurried to the south-east part of the town. Here it did great service in saving the many buildings there. An account after the fire showed that about 30 acres had been destroyed leaving a jumbled mass of delapidated ruins and partly burned timbers. A large majority of the business houses were destroyed and scores of families were left homeless in the residential areas. Surrounding towns tendered their assistance and government aid was immediately sent. Sir John A. MacDonald, although ill at the time, gave the matter his personal attention.

Waterworks Installed.

The following year arrangements were made to install the water works...

.....

At that time sidewalks were made of lumber, hemlock costing \$8.50 per thousand and cedar costing \$8.75 a thousand. The first council meeting in the new hall was held June 6th 1893. The council was worried about children on the streets in that year so they passed a bylaw to keep them off the street after nightfall.

If records are to be relied upon, it was the nightwatchman's duty to place all children found out after dark in the town lockup...

During 1894 extensive additions were made to the Fire Protection Apparatus,....

.....
An increasing interest in the sanitary arrangements in town was evidenced by the fact that the board of health limited the number of pigs in town to not more than one to each householder. The next year their concern for the Constable was shown in the fact that they obtained his first means of protection with the purchase of a revolver, \$5.00, hand cuffs, \$4.00, and a staff \$2.00. Early closing came into the picture too on the May 15, 1899. It was decided to close the shops at 7.30. p.m. except on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturdays, and they were not to open until five o'clock the next morning.

During the next year, 1900, the water situation received some attention and a windmill was purchased. At the time this was the cheapest and most readily available power that could be supplied in this way. In August, 1902, a census of the population was taken by Robert Henderson who received \$5.00 for the job and discovered that there were 1,475 people living in the town at that time....

About this time cement side walks were being introduced. In about 1906 the C.P.R. built a line through Alliston see pp. 23 and 25.

"In 1907 the Council showed its willingness to encourage industry in town when it granted \$5,000, free water, a fixed assessment of \$4,000 for 10 years, and a spur line to the railway to one industrial concern, and, a \$2 yearly rental for 99 years, free water for 10 years, a fixed assessment for \$2,000 for 10 years, \$500 cash and a railway siding to another."

Minutes of a meeting of the Alliston Town Council in 1908 contain "an offer of \$100 to any resident ratepayer who was instrumental in bringing an industry employing 30 or more hands to Alliston,...." In about 1911 "A new well was drilled..., a fact which proved very fortunate, because the ample supply of water was instrumental in having Messrs. Defries, Woodman and Co. bring their silver plating factory to town. They were given free water up to three thousand gallons per day and a fixed assessment of \$2,000 for ten years...The next spring Mr. William McBride was granted \$50 for his part in bringing the silver plating factory to town."

For more information regarding the history of Alliston, the building of the H. and N.W. Railway through the town etc. see: the rest of Cumberland's centennial booklet (some notes taken from it are in envelope 5) , surveys of the town from 1858 and the agreement between the H. and N.W. Railway Co. and the town of Alliston (at the municipal bldg. Alliston, see also envelope 12), and old issues of the Alliston newspapers (some notes from these are in envelope 8) etc. It would be adviseable also to enquire at the clerk's office (Municipal Bldg. Alliston) to see if old minute books of the town meetings, bylaw books or other records can be located. Future researchers should consult also with Mr. Alan Latimer who has a collection of old issues of Alliston newspapers as well as numerous other documents, pictures and artefacts pertaining to the history of the town and surrounding area.

MEADOWBROOK SCHOOL

This school perpetuates the name of the community it served, the same community was serviced by Fletcher's Mill. None of the records looked through to date, state when this school was built. But the Abstract Index to Deeds indicates that Trustees of School Section no. 2, Tosorontio purchased an acre of land on lot 2 concession 6 from George Shepherd of Tosorontio for \$100 on June 28, 1873 (the transaction was registered July 2, 1873). The school probably was built shortly thereafter. Mr. William Broughton whom I interviewed several times, was caretaker of the school for many years, and saved a few of the school's record books which were doomed to be burned. One of these books contains a history of the school which lists who the various teachers, school trustees, and caretakers have been, what improvements have been made to the school building over the years, the salaries paid to the teachers etc. The Author(s) of the history and the date(s) when it was written are not indicated. According to this history, the original building burned down in 1899 and school was held "in a little log house which is now owned by Mr. Fletcher." "The new school was erected on the same site as the old one, and made the same size. The material used for this school was red brick. At this time the teacher was Miss Bell from Alliston who received a salary of \$250.. (The data from the Abstract Index can be checked to see which of the teachers and trustees owned, rented or leased park land. A Myrtle Bell appears in the deeds to park land - she may have been the Miss Bell mentioned above - one would have to check through the land transactions to see when she owned park land.

Meadowbrook is a one-room school - all grades were taught there. The school was closed from 1937 to 1945 because, as of June 1938, only 3 pupils were attending. "On January 1, 1948, the five schools in South Tosorontio became the Township School Area of Tosorontio South..." "In September 1950, electric lights were turned on in the school for the first time with Miss Shirley Adams as teacher." Twenty-seven pupils were attending the school in 1956. According to Mr. Broughton an oil furnace and indoor plumbing were acquired in the late 1950's not long before the school was closed permanently. Now, he says, there is one consolidated public school in the Township, at Tioga, to which about 300 children are bused. Meadowbrook school ceased to be used in about 1965 or 66 as Mr. Broughton recalls - the exact date should be checked. After completing public school children attend Banting Memorial High School in Alliston. Mr. Broughton says that Meadowbrook school used to serve the area from highway 89 to the fifth side road, in concession 4,5,6, and 7. There is information pertaining to schools and school sections in the township in the Minutes of the Municipal Council Meetings of Tosorontio eg. where, when and how many schools were operating in the township over the years, the amount of tax money allotted to them, etc.

The school register itself contains some data eg. the annual age/grade report, registration of children showing the pupils' names, dates of birth, parents' addresses, phone numbers, grades, dates of leaving school, destinations, and also registers contain financial reports etc.

Mr. Broughton who still lives near the school, (on land adjacent to the park), and was caretaker of it for many years, recalled

important events in the school year.

One was the Christmas concert. This was held on the last day before Christmas, usually at night. Gas lamps were brought for lighting. The families of all the children attended. The school at various times had a piano and organ. One teacher who did not play the organ had the instrument placed in the basement where some of the children apparently proceeded to take it apart and were unsuccessful in reassembling it, if indeed they tried. (Mr. Broughton),.

Another very important event was the children's fall fair which generally took place the second week of school. Schools in the south part of Tosorontio held their fairs at Everett while schools in the north part of the township held theirs at Lisle. The children grew vegetables and flowers in their own gardens at home and brought these as well as calves, sheep etc. to be judged. As well as the displays of produce and animals, there were foot races, public speaking contests, etc. Mr. Broughton thought that the school fairs in Essa Township, he said, lasted longer. Mr. McCague was the agricultural representative in 1915 and 16 and according to Mr. Broughton it was he who got the fairs underway in Tosorontio at about that time. Later, he said, local school boards considered the school fairs an unnecessary expense. Mr. Keith McRuer, the Agricultural Representative for South Simcoe mentioned that the Department of Agriculture used to provide the schools and school children with seeds, and eggs for hatching. About 1940 the school fairs were dropped by the Dept. of Agriculture as an organized program. Responsibility for them was turned over to the Department of Education and the program was abandoned. However,

some local township committees continued the project - they met in spring to plan the fairs. The night before the fairs were to be held, display areas were set up for the children.

More information should be gathered regarding the school system and education in the township and at Meadowbrook. As mentioned above there is data pertaining to schools in Tosorontio in the Minutes of the Township Council Meetings, but I have not had time to search it out. It might be worthwhile to interview more old-timers and younger persons as well concerning the local educational setup and changes which have taken place in the rural school system. These people as well as Mr. K. McRuer, could doubtless supply more information regarding the fall fairs than has been gathered to this point. One might wish to learn more about why the school fairs were discontinued - why school boards considered them an unnecessary expense. (Were young people less interested in farming and less likely to remain on farms in the area on reaching adulthood?) Are increasing numbers of young adults moving to urban centres? The researcher should check at Ontario Archives for government documents relating to education.

Future researcher may wish to relate the process of centralization of school facilities to trends toward centralization of other services eg. Many towns and villages sprang up and flourished briefly in the latter half of the 19th century and many communities built schools during this period. Subsequently many such centres declined with the lumber industry or through other causes, and many schools were no longer needed or used. Of course the development of improved methods of transportation has facilitated centralization of educational as well as other services. Wigby¹ does provide

some information concerning the history of schools in Tosorontio though very little is said about Meadowbrook school.

Since the Meadowbrook school may be restored (inside) and used as an interpretive centre, it is fortunate that Mr. Broughton has lent a negative of the interior of the school - this has been copied. Mr. Broughton also has a picture of the exterior of the school taken when it still was topped with a bell tower. He has offered to lend this and other old pictures of the area to be copied if the Department wishes to do this. (eg. of the main street of Everett (1919) with old car, the first areoplane to land in Alliston in 1917, an Orangemans Parade in Alliston 1920, July 19, 1919 Peace Day celebrations in Alliston, the Grand Trunk station and train in Alliston etc.)

1. R. Wigby. The Centennial Review of the Township of Tosorontio, 1850-1950. Alliston press, 1951 pp. 83-93
Reference to Meadowbrook school p. 59

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preliminary, of material relating
to the human history of

EARL ROWE PARK

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Some of the municipal records of Toronto, Adjala, Essa and Tecumseth as well as newspaper clippings relating to the history of these townships, are located at Simcoe Co. Archives, Midhurst (See envelope 6 for xeroxed lists of their holdings.)

The Town clerk's office (municipal bldg. Alliston) has access to other historical records than those listed in the bibliography. However, they are not kept on the premises and since time was limited I did not ask that they be specially brought out. Eventually, however, they should be gone through. Old Minute books of the Alliston Town Council Meetings might be among these records. These books must exist because Cumberland used them in compiling "A Brief History of Alliston..." for the Alliston Centennial Celebrations. These would give insight into the role of persons owning land in what is now Earl Rowe Park, in town affairs. Cumberland's booklet is helpful in this regard, but the Minutes of the Town meetings from which he drew his material would be more complete.

As mentioned in the bibliography, there are many government reports which I have neither listed nor looked through. These probably provide a great deal of useful information. They can be found in the Ontario Archives card catalogues. Farming and lumbering journals might also be helpful. Future researchers should find out what relevant theses have been written about the area. (geography, history, anthropology, sociology theses could

all be useful). Bob Bowes, Whitney Block, Parl Bldg. Toronto, has bibliographies which should be consulted.

Centennial booklets and newspaper articles do not always give their sources of information. Undocumented comments should be cross-checked with other data where possible. These booklets and articles are useful, however, when they record personal experiences and recollections of individual pioneers of their friends or progeny. And some of the booklets, eg. Cumberland's, do provide some indication of what source material was used.