

During the early years of the Canal, Port Robinson surpassed St. Catharines, Welland, and even Buffalo in importance. In fact, Welland did not even exist at that time. Port Robinson was about midway between the two lakes and the tow-boys and tow-horses made this one of their main stopping places. Even when the Canal was built straight on to Port Colborne, Port Robinson retained its old importance and continued to thrive. One of its hotels kept by Dilly Coleman could accommodate one hundred guests, but there were several other hotels, all of which did a good business. In fact, at one time the village had ten stores, upwards of fifteen shops of various kinds, two grist mills, a sawmill, a plaster-mill, a shingle factory and the shipyard and drydock.

Smith's "Canada" gives the population in 1849 as 400, but there is no doubt that at one time it had at least double that number of inhabitants. At least two or three hundred travellers were frequently there in a single day.

Port Robinson became a police village in 1856. For some years the people showed no desire to be incorporated as a municipality but after the decline had begun, a request for incorporation was made and considerable difficulty was experienced in finding the number required in order that it might assume the status of a village.

In the Fenian Raid days, Port Robinson was the headquarters of the Welland Canal Field Battery. Lt.-Col. R. S. King was the commanding officer. After his death the headquarters of the Battery was moved to St. Catharines.

Mention has been made elsewhere of Port Robinson's disappointment when Welland was made the County Town. This was one severe blow, but soon others fell upon the thriving village. Some of the industries declined and died out by reason of competition which came from places more favored. Fire at various times consumed several stores and factories. A very disastrous fire in 1888 wrought the greatest damage. Many of the places thus destroyed were never rebuilt. The canal toll office there was closed in 1895, and in 1897 the Customs Office was removed to Welland.

To-day Port Robinson is less than half the size it once was. Unfortunately it has suffered as so many other inland towns have. It has a few places of business, but easy means of communication with larger centres have deprived these of much of the local trade.

FORT ERIE

Fort Erie is situated at the south-east corner of the Township of Bertie where the Niagara River leaves Lake Erie. It is at the Canadian end of the Peace Bridge and thus is only about two miles from the foot of Main St. in Buffalo. It is also at the eastern end of the Garrison Road, that old and historic highway which is the main thoroughfare to Port Colborne about twenty miles up the Lake.

About 1750 the French built a stockade and established a trading post at this point. Within the next ten or fifteen years, the struggle for the possession of the North American continent had occurred and at its close the old French post was destroyed and abandoned.

In 1764 Capt. Montresor was commissioned by the British to ascend the Niagara and establish a trading-post for the British. He selected the exact spot where the old fort now stands, probably a mile above where the end of the Peace Bridge is. Here he built a stockade which his superior officer, Col. Bradstreet, named Fort Erie. The site was a strategic one as later events proved.

The earliest route from Niagara into the interior by land followed the Portage Road to Chippawa and then the trail along the margin of the River to Fort Erie, which in early days

is frequently spoken of as "The Garrison". Owing to the nearness of the Fort to American territory and to the fact that the river can be crossed there with comparative safety, the Americans looked upon it as a logical place to make an attack and the British as a desirable place to defend. What happened in 1812-14 and in 1866 has been recorded in other chapters and illustrates the importance of Fort Erie in the eyes of both nations.

As time went on a few settlers came in. Most of these took land on the river or lake front and not too far from the fort, for obvious reasons. In the early years of the nineteenth century when trouble seemed to be brewing, the British strengthened the fort and the garrison. When the war of 1812 broke out, these improvements had not been completed although at that time it had been occupied by a British garrison for nearly fifty years. As a matter of fact, in 1764 Sir Wm. Johnson had obtained from the Seneca Indians by treaty a strip of land four miles wide on each side of the river from near the Falls to Lake Erie and ever since that date a garrison had been at Fort Erie to protect vessels carrying supplies to settlers farther west and which usually came back loaded with furs.

In 1781 the survey of the township and accordingly of the site of Fort Erie was begun. In that same year Jane Warren, daughter of an officer at the Fort, was born. She is said to have been the first white child born in Fort Erie.

By 1784 there were about ten families on the land near the fort. Soon after a ferry system was established. The Canadian landing place was about two miles below the fort and the American landing was at Black Rock. The ferry was conducted by a British boat which could carry five horses at one time.

In 1795 the Duc de la Rochefaucauld-Liancourt who visited the district says that the fort consisted of a few log houses surrounded by tottering palisades and without ramparts. Near by were four large buildings made of hewn logs and used as storehouses and dwellings for workmen. Twenty voyageurs were busy loading and unloading the vessels and the cargoes were transferred to Chippawa in batteaux manned by five men each. The garrison consisted of the 5th Foot in charge of Capt. Pratt. The soldiers cultivated a plot of ground around the fort. The "Chippawa", a British schooner, came in while the Duc was there and another vessel was at the dock. Near by was a tavern and a few houses.

In 1807 there was a village of about twenty-five houses around the fort. The first meeting or municipal purposes of which any record survives was held in 1808 in the house of Andrew Miller. Other names mentioned in these early records are Baxter, Buck, Douglas, Hanins, Hirrot, Hershey, Haun, Harper, Hibbard, Nigh, Karr, Learn, Sherk, Pound, Wilson, Warren, Wintermute, Winger, Platow, Senn, Trout, Page and Zavitz. Most of these had come in from Pennsylvania after the war of American Independence.

Fort Erie was the scene of much fighting during the war of 1812-14 and did not recover for several years. Then again in 1866 the village was practically destroyed, and the country laid waste. Since that time the village enjoyed quite a growth but did not become very large.

The completion of the Peace Bridge in 1927 has opened a new avenue of development and Fort Erie is now rapidly on the road to cityhood. The fort is now in ruins but the grounds are beautifully kept by the Park Commission.

In 1857 Fort Erie was incorporated as a Village. It had an area of about 900 acres and extended for nearly two miles and a half along the river front. At that time it had a population of about 900. It contained ten stores, four taverns, a machine shop, four churches and a large drill-shed used as the headquarters of the 44th Battalion.

In 1930 the population is 2,400 and its boundaries reach to Bridgeburg on the North. The combined villages, making one industrial centre, have a chemical plant, a steel plant, and

an Air Chute plant. As it is a railroad centre many railroad men find employment here. Fort Erie has good churches and a beautiful High School situated in the boundaries of Bridgeburg. It has a large artificial ice arena capable of seating 6,500. It also has an Air Port.

Mention should be made of the late Dr. Wm. M. Douglas who passed away in 1929. He was a native son and a man of most philanthropic spirit. He lived his life with the purpose of doing all the good possible to his fellow men and when he died he bequeathed to the village \$300,000 and a site for a hospital. This hospital will soon be completed and will stand as a permanent monument to the kindly donor.

Preparations are being made for the erection of a fine hotel, the "Haddon Hall", at the entrance to the Peace Bridge. It is to be an eight-storey building, fire-proof, and having 115 rooms. The Dining Room will seat 400 persons. The building will be modern in every respect.

PORT COLBORNE

This thriving town is situated in the township of Humberstone at the south end of the Welland Canal, Lake Erie. It covers an area of approximately 790 acres. The land on which it is built was received from the Crown by a Mr. Robinson and the location was known as Gravelly Bay until the Canal was completed to that point in 1832. The original name is due to the fact that gravel was abundant in the little bay. Its present name was given to it in honor of Sir John Colborne.

This distinguished gentleman was very prominent in Canada during the '30's. Before coming to Canada he had served with Wellington's army in the Peninsular War and after the Napoleonic peril was ended the grim old veteran was sent out as Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada. In 1835 he proceeded to administer the Clergy Reserves for the benefit of the Church of England inasmuch as he understood this denomination was meant in the portion of the Act which said the Reserves were for the support of the Protestant Clergy. He endowed forty-four rectories of the Church of England with the finest parts of the reserved land and thereby incurred the great displeasure of the other Protestant bodies. So bitter was the feeling that many people declared to Lord Durham that this act was the main cause of Mackenzie's rebellion.

When the Rebellion broke out Sir John's term of office was just coming to an end, but when he was actually taking boat to return home, instructions were received from England appointing him Commander-in-chief of the forces against the rebels. As an old soldier, he entered the campaign with great vigor and the rebels were quickly crushed. In Nov. 1838 he became Governor-General of Canada and was sworn in as such in Jan. 1839. From this distinguished public man, Port Colborne got its name.

Much of the early history of Port Colborne is the history of the building of the canal, and this need not be repeated. The work proceeded under great difficulties in the early years owing to the rock which had to be penetrated in the Lake Erie section. Also in 1832 the Asiatic cholera spread panic among the workmen. Large numbers died, and medical aid against the scourge was hard to obtain. Scores of laborers as well as many of those who were carrying on relief work, died. For a time work had to be suspended entirely, but the plague disappeared when winter came on.

Hon. W. H. Merritt in 1834 bought most of the land on which the town now stands and sold it off in building lots. About the same time he had a post office established in the settlement. As member of Parliament he had the greatest influence in calling the attention of the Government to the needs of the district for the Port Colborne of those days consisted of only a half dozen houses and one small store in which the post office was kept. These were clustered around the lock which on the first canal was quite close to the lake, some distance south of the centre