

Historical Sketch of the County of Wellington

INTRODUCTORY.

The design of the publishers in compiling the following brief sketch of Wellington County has been to collect and preserve in a permanent form for its people a record of its early history, much of it now existing only in the memories of the older inhabitants, or in scattered and detached fragments, or private memoranda and records, which with the lapse of time are gradually wasting away. In the biographical sketches that form a prominent feature of this work will be found the records of many of the early pioneers, who with undaunted courage, and an unlimited faith in the future, entered upon the task of subduing the wilderness, and transforming the primeval forest into the present broad expanse of fertile fields, interspersed with important centres of population, and busy hives of human industry. Although we have few records to offer of great military or naval achievements, such as grace the history of some older communities in Canada, and although as a consequence this narrative must of necessity be a recital of deeds more practical than brilliant, yet no men more good and true, or more worthy of having their deeds recorded, have furnished data for the historian, than those who by their early toils and privations laid the foundations for the present prosperity of Wellington County.

"For men were men in those brave days of old."

In the prosecution of the labors connected with this work, personal consultations have been held with very many of the descendants of the early settlers; also many public and private documents and reports have been examined, as well as many pamphlets and periodicals published from time to time with special reference to particular events in the history of the different localities.

While we cannot say that our history is wholly free from inaccuracies, we have endeavored by great care, and assiduous labor in its compilation, to give a fair, impartial and reliable history, realizing that upon its accuracy more than upon any amount of studied language, or literary excellence, depends the value of the work.

In this connection we wish to thank our many friends in Wellington County, both in public and private life, who by their kindly co-operation have enabled us to collect the necessary data, and by their generous support have made the publication of this work possible.

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GEOGRAPHICAL POSITION AND EXTENT.

The County of Wellington occupies a central position in the Western Peninsula of Ontario, and has a superficial area of 652,578 acres, or about 1,020 square miles. It is very irregular in shape. At the time of the early settlement in Ontario, townships seem to have been laid out with little regard for system, or symmetrical proportion, and the erratic projections and directions of most of the county boundaries can only be described by the term irregular. The extreme length from south-east to north-west is about 60 miles, and it varies from one to three townships in width.

SOIL.

Clay and sandy loams are the preponderating soils. Heavy clay exists to the extent of about thirteen per cent. with a depth of about six inches and resting on a clay subsoil; clay loam about forty per cent., with a depth of from six inches to two feet, and resting on a sand and gravel subsoil; sandy loam about twenty-nine per cent., depth two and one-half feet; sand inappreciable. A very small proportion—not determinable—is reported to be stony or rocky for profitable cultivation, except in the Township of Erin, which reports about ten thousand acres; very little is so hilly as to be objectionable for the purposes of cultivation; about fifteen and one-half per cent. is bottom, about eleven per cent. is swampy, and a small proportion—not determinable—wet, springy land. The proportion reported rolling and cultivable is about seventy-three and one-half per cent. For agricultural purposes about forty-five and one-half per cent. is reported first class, thirty-one per cent. second class, and the remainder third class. The county is well watered by spring creeks, and wells; also by branches of the River Speed, the Grand, the Conestoga, and the Maitland.

GEOLOGY.

(From the Ontario Geological Reports.)

In the nomenclature which has been adopted for the geological formations of Canada, the system of local designations has been resorted to as the one generally considered to be most convenient.

In Canada, the Niagara rocks of the Lower Silurian period are succeeded by a series of strata that are largely in the neighborhood of Guelph, and were designated by Sir William Logan as the Guelph formation. This formation is interesting, all the more, because apparently no example of the formation occurs elsewhere. They form a lenticular mass, reaching in extreme breadth about thirty-five miles, and thinning out in one direction towards the Niagara River, and resting the other edge on the Great Manitoulin. In the central part their greatest thickness is about one hundred and sixty feet.

In the River Speed, in the bed of the stream, under the bridge on the Brook Road, there are exposed several feet of dark brown very bituminous dolomite, succeeded a little way up on the west bank by a mass of whitish coralline dolomite, which appears on the side of the road. About half a mile above Guelph near the right bank of the Speed, in the quarry, is a white subcrystalline dolomite, the strata of which are altogether about twelve feet thick. All of the beds contain obscure casts of fossils; chiefly of corals and bivalve shells. Among them are *Favosites Gothlandica*, *Halysites Catenulatus*, *Columnaria*, *Megalomus Canadensis*, with species of *Pleurotomaria* and *Orthoceras*. The strata are probably a little higher in the series than those of the same color at the bridge. Similar beds are extensively wrought a little below, and yield an excellent building stone. Some of the beds are burned for lime. Nearly five miles below Guelph, where a bridge crosses the Speed on the town line of Puslinch, there is a section, consisting at the base of fifteen feet of black hard compact bituminous dolomite, without observed fossils; followed by seven feet of brown bituminous strata. On these rest seven feet of buff or pale drab dolomite, holding obscure fossils. These exposures on the Speed are nearly in the strike of the strata. The light colored dolomites, which are here seen, rest upon dark colored bituminous strata, and are regarded as the base of the Guelph formation.

The quarries at Guelph, in the Guelph formation, show a thickness of about fifteen feet of workable beds, which range from a few inches to three feet. The stone which is easily worked, and is of a superior kind for building purposes, has been extensively used in the City of Guelph. The strata of this formation appear, so far as examined, to be magnesian limestone, which seems to be in all cases a pure dolomite, and is frequently made up of brilliant crystalline grains, which under a lens are seen to have a characteristic pearly lustre.

The rock is generally porous, cellular, but strongly coherent; and exhibits small cavities lined with crystals. The organic remains which were common in this formation have in most cases been removed by solution. In many cases the shell has been simply enveloped in the

rock, and has left only a cavity corresponding to its exterior. At other times, the interior of the shell was also filled with the dolomite; so that the cavity corresponds only with the thickness of the shell, of which the markings of both the interior and exterior surfaces are preserved. More rarely the cavities thus formed have been filled up with calcareous matter, apparently replacing the substance of the shell; and in one place, great numbers of encrinal fragments have become replaced by a white sparry dolomite, whose color contrasts with the yellowish hue of the base. This last rock, which came from the Strange quarry, Rockwood, was, however, like the others, cellular and a pure dolomite. This was submitted to analysis, with another specimen without fossils from the same locality, a third from the Howitt quarry, Puslinch, and a fourth from the McDonald quarry, Guelph. The first and second gave respectively .90 and .65 per cent. of insoluble sand, while the others dissolved without remainder. All of these were pure dolomites, yielding from fifty-three to fifty-four per cent. of carbonate of lime, with traces of oxyd of iron. At Rockwood, in Eramosa, there is an exposure of more than 100 feet of crystalline dolomite belonging to the Niagara formation, in beds varying from a few inches to ten feet in thickness. Exposures of the rock occupy both sides of the stream, in vertical cliffs. The lower part consists of nearly eighty feet of light grey dolomite, in which divisional plane of stratification appear to be absent. Corals and broken encrinurites abound in it, associated with other fossils. Among the species are *Favosites Gothlandica*, *Halysites Catenulatus*, crinoidal columns, *Rhynchonella Omcata*, *R. Camura*, *Spirifera Niagaraensis*, with species of *Fenestella*, *Aricula*, *Bellerophon*, *Orthoceras*, and *Cyrtoceras*. On this mass there rest about twenty feet of buff or drab colored dolomite, holding nodules and patches of chert; these are succeeded by about five feet of alternating black bituminous-calcareous shale, and dark brown very bituminous limestones. Corals are observed in some of these limestones, and crystals of galena are of common occurrence, both in the limestone and in the shale. Quarries have been opened, both in the lower and upper masses of this encrinal magnesian limestone, which was used in constructing the viaduct over the Eramosa for the Grand Trunk Railway. That from the upper portion appears to be less porous than the lower, and of a better color for architectural purposes; but both are of excellent quality and durable. Caverns occur in the base of the lower mass. One of them extends about a hundred feet under the cliff, with a breadth of about forty feet. The roof, which is eighteen feet high at the entrance, slopes irregularly downwards, and meets the floor at the distance just mentioned, leaving, however, a passage at either corner. One of these is said to lead to a large space beyond from which other passages proceed. The roof is studded with small stalactitic incrustations.

From Rockwood westward, the surface of the country falls at about the same rate as the supposed slope of the strata, so that, on arriving at Guelph, we should still have near to the surface the beds of Rockwood, or strata not far removed from them. Exposures occur about five miles south-westward from Rockwood, on the second lot of the third range, division C., of Guelph. They consist of about six feet of black bituminous shales and limestones, similar to the highest beds at Rockwood, succeeded in ascending order by the following section, of which the last three feet belong to the Guelph formation:—

	Ft.	Ins.
Dark brown bituminous limestone, probably magnesian in beds of about one foot each.....	4	0
Dark brown bituminous limestone, hard, brittle and nearly compact in several beds; the color a shade lighter than the previous beds.....	2	0
Dark brown bituminous granular magnesian limestone....	6	6
Pale buff or yellowish white magnesian limestone, holding <i>Halysites Catenulatus</i> , and imperfect impressions of a few undetermined shells.....	3	0
	15	6

On the north side of the anticlinal the summit of the Niagara series appears to run from Rockwood towards the east side of the Township of Erin.

In Pilkington and Nichol, on the banks of the Irvine and Grand Rivers, near their junction, at Elora, perpendicular cliffs of these dolomites occur; varying in height from seventy-five to eighty or eighty-two feet. The upper portion of these strata is probably near the top of the Guelph formation. The beds in descending order are as follows:—

	Ft.	Ins.
1. Light drab or reddish compact magnesian limestone, in beds of from three to six inches, with small cavities (probably once holding fossils), and cracks lined with calcespar. The fossils are <i>Halysites Catenulatus</i> , <i>Obolus Pentamerus Occidentalis</i> , <i>Megalomus Canadensis</i> and <i>Murchisonia Logani</i> ; with several species of <i>Pleurotomaria</i> and <i>Orthoceras</i>	12	0
2. Buff colored coralline magnesian limestone, with a structure of about three feet, near the middle, filled with <i>Megalomus Canadensis</i> ; the corals observed are <i>Favosites Gothlandica</i> , <i>F. Polymorpha</i> , and <i>Stromatopora Concentrica</i>	14	0
3. Pale buff or yellowish white compact magnesian limestone with a conchoidal fracture, in massive beds holding fossils. Among these are <i>Favosites Gothlandica</i> , <i>Pentamerus Occidentalis</i> , with species of <i>Rhynchonella</i> , <i>Murchisonia</i> and <i>Orthoceras</i>	56	0
	82	0

At Fergus a section occurs near Webstersmill, displaying about twenty feet of a strata which would underlie the preceding. About sixteen feet of these are a pale buff magnesian limestone, with casts and impressions of fossils, among which are *Favosites Gothlandica*, *Megalomus Canadensis*, and *Murchisonia Logani*. The remaining four feet consist of a grey hard magnesian limestone, which rests upon a mass of the same color, but somewhat closer grained, forming the bed of the stream. About a mile farther up the stream, on the land of..... there are beds of pale yellowish grey magnesian limestone, weathering to a light buff. These would be somewhat lower than the beds at Fergus, and contain *Favosites Gothlandica*, *F. Polymorpha*, *Pentamerus Occidentalis*, *Megalomus Canadensis*, *Murchisonia Logani*, *M. Longispira*, and *Pleurotomaria Huronensis*. Some of the Fergus beds yield good lime; they range from two inches to two feet in thickness, but are for the most part thin and irregular, and although some of them are used for rough buildings, the stone for facing is usually brought from Guelph.

The Saugeen clay of the Post Tertiary system occurs in the north part of Wellington County.

The west bank of the South Saugeen River, where it crosses the town line of Minto and Normanby, exhibits about fifteen feet of fine yellow clay, which apparently belongs to the Saugeen division. The underlying material is here concealed. On the south side of the same river, at the Town of Mount Forest, there is a hill covered with gravel, beneath which appears a fine blue clay. The surface of this seems to be deeply worn by denudation, and the overlying gravel fills up the inequalities. Beneath the gravel, clay is also observed in several other

hills in the vicinity. Along the River Conestoga, in Maryborough and Peel, a very hard bluish-drab pebbly clay, locally known as hard-pan, forms the subsoil. Throughout the township just named, and part of Arthur, drab clays, holding a few pebbles and boulders of gneiss and green stone, are generally distributed over the surface, which presents a broadly undulating aspect. It is not certain whether the underlying bluish pebbly clays of this region represent the Erie division; in some cases they may belong to the more ancient unstratified drift.

The great Artemisia gravel belt crosses the county. The westerly boundary intersects the east half of the north line of Arthur. The curve is then reversed, and takes in the north-east corner of Minto, and the northern half of Arthur. Entering West Luther, it again curves to the east and includes the south-west part of that township; from the south line of Luther, it proceeds in a direct course to the north side of Wilmot in Waterloo County. The easterly boundary runs through Caledon Township, striking the southeast of Erin, thence with a gentle curve to the eastward until it reaches the centre of Puslinch, and turns southerly into Beverley Township.

This great bed of gravel has a general parallelism with the Niagara escarpment, and follows the highest ground of the peninsula. The materials composing it consist principally of the ruins of the Guelph formation, on which the greater part of it lies. Pebbles of Laurentian and Huronian rocks are everywhere mixed with the others, and sometimes form a considerable proportion, while rounded fragments from the harder beds of the Hudson River formation occur locally in some abundance. The gravel is all well rounded, and generally coarse; it often constitutes what might properly be called shingle, being loose and free from any admixture of clay; and it is distinctly stratified. Well worn boulders of Guelph, Laurentian and Huronian rocks are disseminated through the whole mass, and wherever the gravel has been dug for road making, there may be found heaps of these which have been thrown aside.

THE INDIANS AND THE FIRST EXPLORERS.

"This is the forest primeval; but where are the hearts that beneath it Leaped like the roe, when he hears in the woodland the voice of the huntsman."—Longfellow.

In the early part of the last century, the territory comprising the County of Wellington was a wilderness, covered with the original forest, and traversed only by the Indians and an occasional trader or trapper in quest of furs. The first authentic knowledge we possess of the Indian tribes inhabiting Ontario is derived from the explorations of Samuel de Champlain, who planted the flag of France in the Western Peninsula, and who has been described as "An adventurous explorer, a successful discoverer, a chivalrous gentleman and a devoted patriot to his native France."

He was the first of his race to look upon the waters which surround the Western Peninsula, or to set foot upon its shores. In 1615, Champlain, on his voyage of discovery along the shores of Lake Huron, is said to have camped for a while at the present site of Goderich—then called Maniseturung, from the river since named the Maitland—, and after spending the winter of 1615-16 with the tribes of the Huron tract, he is said by some to have returned to Georgian Bay through the Western Peninsula, crossing the height of land. If this is so, it is possible that the advent of the first white man in what is now Wellington County dates back to the expedition of Champlain in the year 1616.

The powerful Neutral Nation of Indians were at the time in possession of the whole central and southern portion of the great peninsula of Western Ontario; and thus lay interposed between their cousins—the Hurons of Georgian Bay—called by the French Iroquois du Nord, and another related race, the Iroquois of New York State. The Hurons and Iroquois had long been at deadly feud, but by a remarkable compact, they were to meet when within the bounds of the Neutrals—and for many years did meet—on terms of apparent amity, often sharing the same wigwam and the same meals. In 1626 the Neutrals were governed by the great chief Souharissen, a warrior feared by all the neighboring tribes. In that year Pere Daillon, a Franciscan friar, with two companions, entered the realms of this great chieftain on the mission of their church.

Meeting at first a friendly reception, Daillon sent back his two companions; and alone this intrepid friar, whose sole armament was the pack on his back and the staff in his hand, traversed the peninsula from one end to the other. His efforts, however, were doomed to failure, and finally, after a great deal of ill usage, he barely escaped with his life. Fourteen years later, another attempt was made from the Huron Mission to Christianize the Neutrals; Jean de Brébeuf—"The Ajax of the Mission"—who a few years later was put to death by the Iroquois, with the most appalling tortures, in company with Pere Chaumott traveled through the wintry forests from one village to another, exposed to the greatest personal danger. As the falls of the Grand River at Elora are in the heart of the old "Attiwandaronk Land"—the realm of the Neutral Nation—these brave and devoted Jesuit missionaries must have been familiar with their wild ravines, and there can be no doubt of their having visited the locality.

In 1648 the Iroquois, armed with matchlocks that they had obtained from the Dutch at Fort Orange (Albany), invaded the territory of the Hurons, and this tribe, who gave their name to the second in size of the great chain of American lakes, were dispersed and almost utterly annihilated. The turn of the Neutrals came next, and although they made a desperate resistance, their primitive arms were of little avail against firearms, aptly named by the Huron refugees: "Irons with indwelling devils."

After the great battle of 1651, on the present site of Hamilton, the inland villages were abandoned to their fate, and the Iroquois swept unresisted over the whole peninsula. In those dark days many availed themselves of the shelter of the Elora ravines, and many of the antiquities in the museum at Elora, it is thought, should be referred to the days of the Iroquois Terror. From this time, for over one hundred years we have no account of this region, and the French maps have nothing to tell us of the Western Peninsula but "nations detruit"—tribes exterminated. In 1696 the Sulpician missionary Gainee describes the peninsula as merely the stalking ground for deer, and the special bear garden of the Iroquois from the south. Wandering Ojebway tribes, particularly the Mississagas, came in from the north, and by the time of the Revolutionary War occupied the whole tract.

In the deeds for the extinction of the Indian titles subsequent to 1781, the Canadian Governors recognized these tribes as the sole aboriginal races of the Western Peninsula, although we now know that their title rested upon a brief occupation.

The Mississagas in 1784 surrendered their claim to a large tract of land bounded on the north-east by a line running exactly north-west, from a point near what is now Burlington, to the Conestoga River at what is now Arthur Village. This is the present boundary line between the Townships of Puslinch, Guelph, Nichol, and Peel, on the one side, and Eramosa and Garafraxa on the other. This purchase was made by Sir John Johnson at Niagara, on May 22, 1784. It was supposed at the time that this area included the whole of the Grand River valley. On October 25th of the same year, by a treaty signed by Sir Frederick Haldimand, the Governor of Canada, and Joseph Brant, Thayendanegea, sachem and chief warrior of the Five Nations, a tract of land, on the Ouse or Grand River, six miles in width on each side of the river from Lake Erie to its source, was given to the Mohawk nation, and such other