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REV. P. J. DONOVAN, PASTOR

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The Early Days in Dunnville and its Vicinity

P. J. Donovan

This is a short story of the early days in Dunnville and in the neighboring townships. As the narrative proceeds, keep in mind that in this brief history it is impossible to relate everything that is known about these early times, and at this late date it is not always easy to get accurate information on the subject. However there is enough matter here to create interest. The period covered reaches to 1878. Some of the information is taken from "The Illustrated Historical Atlas of the County of Haldimand," published in 1879 by H. R. Page & Co., Toronto, Ont., and the rest the writer has picked up here and there at different times.

DUNNVILLE

On the high ground along the Grand River, within a short distance of the south-eastern boundary of the present town, is the Klingender farm, the original site of Dunnville. This, no doubt, is the place where Squire Anthony, one of the very early settlers, made his home some time before the dam and Feeder Canal were built. Mr. Fred Klingender, who is now living on this property, and who was a baby when his father moved here nearly eighty years ago, says that a grist and a saw mill, a store and a distillery stood on the place, and that the remains of the foundations of some of these old buildings still remain. A part of the timber used in the construction of his present dwelling house was taken from a building once used here as a hotel. A brickyard was also located on this site.

About 1825 Solomon Minor settled

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on the present site of Dunnville, and two years later the construction of the dam across the Grand River was begun. It was at first proposed to dam the river at Port Maitland, but the company was prevented from doing so by Commodore Barron, then in command of the naval station there, who refused to allow the dam to be built within five miles of the mouth of the river. The present site of the dam was, therefore, selected, and as soon as the selection was made Oliver Phelps bought three lots from the Hon. Henry John Bolton, and had them laid out into village lots, which were sold, and buildings were soon erected on them. The progress of the new village was for some time very slow, as most of the laborers employed on the dam and the Feeder lived in boarding houses, and after the works were completed moved away. At the time there were no roads in the adjacent townships communicating with Dunnville, only a path along the north side of the river bank. The Robinson Road was chopped out in 1833, and the Diltr Road the following year, but neither was fit for travel for a few years afterwards, except in winter or late in the summer. The Robinson Road was not rendered passable for teams until later. Mr. Wilkinson of Buffalo was the contractor for the building of the dam, which with the Feeder was built by the Welland Canal Co., of which the late Hon. Wm. H. Merritt was the promoter and manager. The Feeder was finished on the 28th of September, 1829, on which day the water was first let in. For years the Feeder was so shallow that when the weeds grew up in summer the Company had to have